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# PROFESSOR SMYTH'S
# LECTURES ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

VOL. I

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# LECTURES ON MODERN HISTORY

## FIRST SERIES

FROM THE IRRUPTION OF THE NORTHERN NATIONS
TO THE CLOSE OF THE AMERICAN
REVOLUTION

# LECTURES ON HISTORY

SECOND AND CONCLUDING SERIES

ON

# THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY WILLIAM SMYTH

PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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VOL. I

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# LECTURES ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

## LECTURE I.

### LOUIS XIV.

*The two following Lectures were originally delivered immediately after the Lectures on the Revolution of* 1688.

1810.

WE have been now long engaged in the history of England, which it was impossible to leave, while the civil and at last the religious liberties of the country were at issue.

But we may at length turn to the continent, and inquire what had been in the mean time the history of France.

We are supposed to have left the French history at the death of Henry IV. The monarchy of France grew up from small beginnings, from the constant accession of one province after another, to the central province, of which Paris was the capital; in this manner it swelled out at last into that great kingdom, which of all others has had the most influence on the affairs of Europe. Of this monarchy it was Henry IV. that must be considered as amongst the most distinguished founders; it was he who combined and compressed its discordant parts into a whole; who first harmonized to a sufficient degree its jarring civil and religious interests by the mildness of his counsels and the vigour of his administration. He appeared at the precise period when the want of such a man was most urgent; and with serious faults in his private, and such defects in his public character, as we have

noticed, he has always been (and not very unnaturally) the idol of the French people.

The next interval is from that event to the death of Mazarin, when Louis XIV. assumed the reins of government himself, and became his own minister. This was an interval of about half a century, from the middle of the reign of James I. in our own history to the Restoration. During this time, in England; the constitution had been struggling through its difficulties in the strange manner we have seen; and it might have been hoped that the constitution of France would have made some similar advance to regularity and amelioration. But this was not the case; and so forgotten were all the best interests, so dissipated and misdirected were all the energies of this great nation, that it is difficult for any one, not a native, even to read the narratives of their historians.

Louis XIII. came to the crown at the age of nine, and, though the son of the great Henry, remained through life only a fit object of tutelage. Louis XIV. became king when only five years old. So that it is the history of the first favourites, and it is the reigns of Richelieu and Mazarin that we are to read, not of the kings of France.

The whole, therefore, as might be expected, is a tissue of inexplicable intrigue, which no patience can well unravel, and which it were not worth the labour to unravel, if the attempt were practicable. Whoever succeeded or whoever failed, the queen consort or the queen mother, the minister or the nobility, the Italian favourite or the prince of the blood, the intriguer in the court or the intriguer in the parliament and in the mob of Paris, the people were equally forgotten, and the constitution of the kingdom equally neglected. The authority of the crown, the grandeur of France, and her weight in the politics of Europe, are the only objects deserving of attention which the annals of France have now to offer, even when the objects are of the most dignified nature; the public good, in every rational sense of the word, seems never to have been within the comprehension of any functionary, or any one description of men in the state.

In reading the history of France, the Abbé de Mably, an author of strong democratic feelings, may perhaps have accustomed us to expect too much; but, with the story of

England fresh in the memory, it is impossible not to be impatient on the subject of the civil liberties of France; impatient to observe, that by no prince or minister, at any period or in any shape, any proper representative body, or any fair approach to it, could be created or suffered to exist; even the great Henry, though he called the States General together, in his conversation with his courtiers made light of their authority.

The first surprise that an English student meets with, on turning to consider this period, is to find that there is no history of the ministers, Richelieu and Mazarin, not even of Richelieu, that has obtained any literary reputation. The lives that are quoted are those by Aubery, which are represented by Voltaire as very fit for the purposes of information; but it will not, I think, be found an easy task to read them. There is a life of Richelieu by Le Clerc, which is considered as very accurate, and may therefore, like the former, be consulted: but this work is not esteemed in France the work of a good writer, or of a man capable of forming political views.

With regard to Mazarin, it is quite a specimen of the times, of the minister, and of the people, that a sort of history of him has been manufactured out of the different satires, epigrams, and occasional pieces of pleasantry which appeared in the course of his administration, arranged in the order of the events to which they refer.

The memoirs of these times that have been drawn up and published with and without names are innumerable. Of original works, the best are those of M. de Motteville, M. de Montpensier, Cardinal De Retz, Guy Joly, Rochefoucault, M. De la Fayette, La Faire, Gourville, and St. Simon; these are read, particularly the Memoirs of De Retz. From original works like these, the following histories have been drawn up: L'Intrigue du Cabinet, Louis XIV. sa Cour et le Régent, par D'Anquetil; L'Esprit de la Fronde, not by D'Anquetil, as supposed; these last are the books to which I think it best to refer you.

The memoirs of De Retz are always read; but, notwithstanding their general liveliness, and the sagacity of the maxims with which they abound, the reader will do well to

choose out of the pages such as promise well. For a continued scene of intrigue, which cannot be supposed fairly represented by one who was himself the soul of it, which from its complexity it is impossible to understand, and of which the object seems only to have been whether an Italian favourite, a man of like subtlety and intrigue with the author himself, should or should not be the minister of the country; a picture like this, whatever be the ability of the artist, soon loses its attraction; and the work, even while entertaining and instructive, for the reasons I have mentioned, seldom rises to the merit of historical instruction.

The better to judge of this period, and of what may be expected from the accounts given of it by the French writers, the English reader may, in the first place, look at the history as given in different chapters in Russell's Modern History; he may next find an account sufficiently detailed in the Modern Universal History, with all the French works referred to in the margin; and lastly, he may consider all that Voltaire, no incompetent judge when the history of France is concerned, has thought it necessary to say on this part of his subject, in the one hundred and seventy fifth and one hundred and seventy sixth chapters of his Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations; when to all these have been added the animated observations of the Abbé de Mably, the reader will be able, I expect, without further research, to form an estimate of the whole sufficient for all the purposes of real instruction. The chapters in Russell, then, and those in the Modern Universal History and in Voltaire, with the Abbé de Mably, may be sufficient; or, finally, the French work L'Intrigue du Cabinet presents a narrative which an English reader may go through with considerable interest in many parts, and on the whole without fatigue, and it is quite circumstantial enough for the most regular reader of history.

But while these sheets are going to press, I perceive that new assistance has been offered to the English reader, and I have had an opportunity of reading the late work of Mr. James on the Life and Times of Louis XIV.; the two first volumes are dedicated to that part of the history which preceded his formal accession to the throne; great diligence seems to have been employed by the author, and I know not how the

student can so readily find, as in these pages, all that he need wish to know of the intrigues of Cardinal De Retz, the war of the Fronde, the efforts made to remove Cardinal Mazarin from the administration of the government, and the struggles of the minister, with the assistance of Anne of Austria, the queen mother, to retain it. Condé and Turenne give some dignity to the scene, by their appearance in it; but it is still a miserable scene, tedious and perplexing from its petty intrigues and the total want of any elevated views or patriotic objects in those who were the principal actors in it. We may be grateful to Mr. James for having, notwithstanding, made an interesting work, and for having endeavoured to enable us to understand their movements, and having on this account consulted all the memoirs that relate to them, and compared and judged of their results with candour and ability. His general conclusion may be adopted, that during the wars of the Fronde, neither De Retz, nor Condé, nor Turenne, nor Bouillon, nor La Rochefoucault, nor Beaufort, nor the duke of Orleans had any other design but to serve their vanity, their interest, their pride, or their resentment;—that, on the contrary, there really did exist with the court party a great and permanent object, the maintenance of the royal authority; for this the queen and all her partisans struggled throughout the whole of the contest, and without securing it Mazarin could not rule with any effect; and this unanimity with regard to their object gave ultimate predominance to the royal party.

The work that is most known and quoted, more particularly by English readers, is La Vassor; it must be consulted, especially when any decision is to be formed about the conduct of the Huguenots or Louis XIV., but it is too long and tedious, and embraces too wide a range. La Vassor was a French refugee, and is not liked by the French critics and writers, chiefly, I suspect, on account of the freedom and propriety of his remarks. The description of his work by Voltaire, in his account of the writers of the age of Louis XIV. will, to an English ear, sound rather like praise, than the censure which seems intended.

In England, during the period we are now considering, the public disturbances were connected with the public interests; so, on the continent, the religious interests every where, but

in France, had a reference to the civil interests of the contending parties. In France, on the contrary, the constitution of the country seemed little concerned in the public disputes; and when the great Henry and Sully were removed, this unfortunate country was doomed to feel how wide is the difference between a good king or minister and a good constitution of government. These men, great and good as they were, and patriotic as they might think themselves, had left no public assembly to represent the nation. The States General had been suffered to fall into disuse, or when summoned, only appeared an unwieldy mass, torn asunder by internal jealousies and partial interests, and without any public views. The parliament, in the mean time, could not exercise the authority of the community without evident usurpation. There remained, therefore, on the stage of public affairs, the sovereign, the princes of the blood, and the nobles, the Huguenots, the intriguers in and out of Paris, and the court and court favourites. The intriguers and the court contending with the princes of the blood and the nobles for the plunder of the public; the nobles, when foiled, ready to set up for sovereign-princes in their own domains, or join the arms of Spain; the Huguenots always feeling or apprehending infractions of the edict of Nantz, and therefore exposed to be driven or led aside into new civil and religious wars by every enemy of the court or state; and the power of the crown, the object of the general veneration and regard, converted by force, or by fraud, to serve the private purposes of all parties in their turn; an afflicting spectacle this, and a striking proof of the value of the representative assemblies of a nation in every era of society, from the rudest to the most refined. Of this period, as I have mentioned, the two distinguished men are Richelieu and Mazarin.

Richelieu, who first appears, is evidently fitted for a scene like this in many most important respects; but he either did not comprehend the whole of his high office, or did not live to perform it. The first supposition seems nearest the truth, his objects were the grandeur of France and the force of the monarchy. The permanent happiness of the great mass of the community was only secondary, if indeed it occurred at all. His great merit was that power of genius, which rules

every thing around it apparently with or without the necessary means; his great fault, the want of real patriotism and enlightened benevolence. He however surveyed the situation of his country, had his objects, and accomplished them. He could be at no loss to perceive that abroad the great power opposed to France was the house of Austria; that at home the executive authority was constantly thwarted or controlled, and would always continue to be so, if the princes of the blood and the nobles were not broken down and subdued. And to Richelieu it must have appeared, that neither the house of Austria nor the nobles could be reduced to any tolerable state of inferiority, unless the Huguenots were first crushed; a powerful body, who could be practised upon by both, and between whom and the court there was a never failing source of mutual jealousy and hostility in the difference of their religious tenets. Such must have been the views and reasonings of Richelieu, and therefore, without troubling himself about principles or rights, and with no other means but the resources of his own genius, and the authority which belonged to him as the representative of the crown, no leader of armies or military conqueror, he performed the achievements of those who are. He supported the Protestants in Germany, while he subdued the Protestants in France; he broke the force of the house of Austria abroad, and of the nobles at home; awed the legislative bodies, the parliaments, and all the functionaries of the state; dissipated, terrified, and subjected to his will the intriguers, the courtiers, the generals, the princes of the blood, the nobility, the queen consort, the queen mother, and the very king he served; imprisoned, ruined, proscribed, or brought to the scaffold every person of authority or respect who could be opposed to him; and, on the whole, must be considered as the greatest example of the controlling powers of a single mind in the history of any civilized country.

Peter the Great, when he visited France, embraced his statue in a transport of admiration. We may understand this in the Tamer of Russians; but it is difficult, after all, to consider Richelieu as a patriot, or the enlightened benefactor of France; he cleared away the ground, and this was no doubt a great achievement, for any edifice to be hereafter

erected for the happiness of his country, but he erected none himself: he left nothing behind him but the royal authority. It may be said, indeed, by his admirers, that amidst the violence of friends and foes, it may not be easy to appreciate his character, proper reference being had to the times in which he lived. "Il a fait trop du mal," says the French epigram, "pour en dire du bien; il a fait trop du bon pour en dire du mal." He is favourably dismissed with a distich like this.

Had another minister succeeded with powers of genius like his own, and animated with a generous patriotism, it is possible that during the feebleness of Louis XIII. and the minority of Louis XIV. some provisions might have been made for the proper management of the powers and principles of the constitution, for the States General, the parliaments, and the various acknowledged authorities of that great kingdom, and that England might not have been the only country in the world where the civil and religious liberties of mankind were to be found successfully established, amid the ruins of the papal power and of the feudal system, at the close of the seventeenth century. But no such happiness awaited France or Europe, for it was Mazarin who succeeded; a minister who assisted to build up the national grandeur of France (according to the general notions of national grandeur), and that with more skill and success than were at the time acknowledged, but not a minister with a genius like Richelieu, still less with a benevolence that could meditate upon the political situation of a great people; still less with the understanding that could revive the energies of a free constitution.

The nation, in the mean time, thought as little of its best interests as did Mazarin. Compare it with England: instead of the Hampdens and Falklands of our own country, the debates of the long parliament, the battle of Naseby, the exile of James, the election of William, and the enactment of the Bill of Rights,—we have the Cardinal de Retz and the Counsellor Broussel, the intrigues of the town house of Paris, the parliament, and the court, the war of the Fronde, and the alternate fortunes of the Italian favourite; while the issue of the whole is, the settlement of all differences and disputes, and the final extinction of all hope for the liberties of France, in the rising talents and popularity of Louis XIV.

Louis finished the work which Richelieu had so powerfully begun; he stepped at once, while yet a youth of fourteen, into the place which that extraordinary man had so prepared for his reception; and this great nation, most unfortunately for itself and for the world, seems from that moment to have identified its own dignity and happiness with the personal authority and aggrandizement of the monarch on the throne.

The great object on which the eyes of Europe were turned, for nearly half a century, was Louis XIV.: and on this account, not only the political but even the personal character of the monarch has become a subject of history, and as such must be studied.

In like manner, a very great interest belongs to the lives and characters, the qualities and talents, of the statesmen, the generals, the men of science and literature, who adorned this remarkable age.

The subject, therefore, in all its relations, is very copious. It has attracted the genius of the celebrated Voltaire, and has given occasion to one of his most agreeable and admired productions. If in the general subject, of the reign of Louis, the literature connected with it be included, it may occupy your attention to any possible extent; and it becomes my province, as usual, to mention such works, not as *may*, but as *must* be read; and to attempt, at the same time, to give some faint description of the general importance that belongs to the whole.

But there is another reason which induces me to recommend this part of history to your consideration. It is this: the European forms of government, though originally founded on principles more or less popular, have in general lost their public assemblies, and degenerated into arbitrary monarchies; monarchies, no doubt, very easily to be distinguished from the monarchies of the east; but to be distinguished also from that particular monarchy established in our own island. Now to me it appears, that Louis XIV. and his court, the French monarchy and its establishments, the king, the courtiers, and the nobles, the fleets and the armies, the laws and the police, public edifices and institutions, the arts, the sciences, the literature of France, at this renowned period, form altogether, not indeed a fair general specimen, but the most favourable

specimen that can be well conceived of an arbitrary government founded upon the European model, but existing without any proper representative bodies of the people.

What I wish, therefore, the student to do, is to consider well this the most favourable specimen before him; what are its merits, what its demerits, what on the whole its value, and continually to compare it with our own.

The whole subject, thus considered, comprises a multiplicity of facts, and has relation to many different principles, but is still, I think, intelligible, and within the limit of an estimate: and to form such an estimate is, as I conceive, a task worthy of any student's best powers of investigation and reflection.

The form of government established in this island will materially facilitate the progress and increase the importance of an inquiry like this. The histories and constitutions of the two kingdoms have always served to illustrate each other; and this relation of contrast and comparison by no means ceases at the period now before us. It rather increases and seems brought to a sort of close. Survey the whole of society in each kingdom; in France, for instance, the character of the monarch, the statesman, the courtier, the nobleman, the lawyer, the merchant, and the citizen; survey the military, the aristocratic, the national character. These may, and should be, all compared with the corresponding characters that exist in our own country. The peculiar faults and merits of each of these should be traced up, as in general they may, to the single circumstance of certain differences in the forms of government established in the two countries, particularly to the presence or absence of the legislative assemblies; and still more particularly to the presence or absence of that assembly which represents the people. Certain merits and benefits are compatible with either form: some are found more in the one than in the other; some, for instance, more under an arbitrary or purely monarchical government, like that of Louis XIV., than under a mixed and free form like our own.

But as all human good is but the result of a favourable balance struck between contending advantages and disadvantages, the question is, on which side does this favourable balance lie: in favour of the arbitrary or the mixed form? and to what degree does it preponderate?

Were a subject like this, which I have now mentioned, thoroughly investigated, many important mistakes and unfortunate delusions might be avoided, especially by those who live under a mixed government like our own. Such men are continually expecting to enjoy the blessings of a free form of government without any of its concomitant evils; the greatest good, without any of the disadvantages by which it must be purchased; they would have liberty, for instance, without ever being exposed to any popular excesses; but this is not the manner in which nature dispenses her benefits; it is to require impossibilities.

Again, the euthanasia of the British constitution has been said to be an arbitrary monarchy; an arbitrary monarchy is certainly the point to which it has a great tendency to converge in any ordinary state of the world. Let, therefore, the arbitrary monarchy of Louis XIV. be considered; it is, as I have already mentioned, the most favourable specimen that can be offered for our reflection. Let it then be considered, and it will be seen what is the very best result that can possibly take place, if ever the democratic part of our mixed form of constitution, on whatever account, should fall into decay.

It is for these reasons that I would recommend a more diligent and extensive perusal of the private memoirs and literary works belonging to the age of Louis XIV. than on other occasions I should be disposed to think necessary. An historian, that is, a writer or reader of history, as distinguished from other writers or readers, must no doubt be distinguished by a more intimate knowledge of the private memoirs and literary productions connected with the courts and different kingdoms of Europe. But this is a species of reading which, though very attractive in itself, approaches not a little to a sort of novel reading; is apt to occupy too large a portion of time, and rather fitted to render a man entertaining in society than instructive in a senate, or intelligent in a cabinet. It is a species of reading which, if long dwelt upon, is not likely to form the mind to those commanding views, and general conclusions which constitute the great interest of history, and which, when they are just and can fairly be drawn, distinguish the statesman from the courtier, and the philosopher from the man of letters. With respect, however, to the age of Louis

XIV., for the reasons I have mentioned, more of this species of reading may be indulged in than would in general be advisable; and I shall proceed to state such works as I think may be properly recommended to your attention.

The great magazine from which subsequent writers of history and compilers of anecdotes have drawn their materials is the Memoirs of the Duc de St. Simon.

On the breaking out of the late French revolution, a complete edition of this work seems then, for the first time, to have been given to the world. Before that event it seems not to have been allowed to appear, except in a mutilated state. The freedom, that is the propriety, of remark, which the duke had occasionally exercised, was too great to be exposed to the consideration of the public while the system of government remained the same: but this is only an additional recommendation to a philosophic inquirer. Of the thirteen volumes, the first six belong to the reign of Louis XIV. the two next to the regency of the duke of Orleans, four others to the history of distinguished individuals, and the concluding one to the researches of the duke into the nature and prerogatives of the French peerage, the political constitution of Spain, and matters of a similar nature.

To render these memoirs properly interesting, or even intelligible, the general detail of the events of the reign must be first known, and must be learnt elsewhere; and I should therefore propose that some concise account should be read, like that of Henault, for instance, or Millot, or the late history of D'Anquetil; when this has been done, the allusions and passing remarks and descriptions of St. Simon will be properly felt and understood. Amidst a variety of other matter, particulars of the following nature may be found; the extent of the king's natural genius and talents; his ignorance of history, laws, persons, and events, to a degree that led him into occasional mistakes of the grossest nature; his hatred of birth and talents; his rage for flattery; his extreme egotism; his taste for details; the manner in which his ministers made him suppose that he directed every thing, while he was in fact himself directed; his contrivances to keep every one anxious only for his favour, and dependent on that favour for all personal consequence; his system of espionage, extended

even to the opening of letters. The very arbitrary and violent nature of his selfishness, rendering every one around him (his children, mistresses and courtiers) entirely subservient to his own whims and amusements, in defiance of all considerations of their convenience, and even of their health; his exterior advantages, his fêtes, his gallantries, his mistresses, his splendour; the remarkable history of Madame de Maintenon, her management of the king and his ministers; these are the topics of the work, interspersed with many curious anecdotes and descriptions of the king's children, legitimate and illegitimate, with some account of Fénélon; of the duke of Burgundy, the hope of the nation, and of his duchess, the delight of the court.

The revocation of the edict of Nantz, and some of the leading events of the reign are also discussed; and among the lives of distinguished persons, some may be readily selected as of more particular consequence, Fénélon, for instance, Heinsius, James II., William III.

That part which relates to military transactions seems imperfect and very partial, but may be consulted by those who wish to see the manner in which the humiliation of France was surveyed by St. Simon, and probably by most Frenchmen at the time. No proper testimony is paid to the genius of Marlborough, and the English reader looks in vain for the hero and the triumphs of his nation.

On the whole, the greatest part of these six volumes is worth reading. It is observable, however, that all the good sense, that all the virtue, and even the almost cynical spirit of St. Simon, never seem to have suggested to his mind the radical and fatal defect of the whole system, and amidst all the misfortunes of his country, the greatest misfortune of all, the want of a free constitution. The duke even declares to his reader, that he meddles not with politics, and means only to describe what he has himself seen or learned from others of the scene that is more immediately around him. But this circumstance does not render the work at all less important, in the way I have proposed this subject of the reign of Louis XIV. to your consideration. You have only, on this account, the picture of the court of an arbitrary monarch on the European model more faithfully given, and the facility of

comparing it with your own more complete. And to this task I must therefore take this opportunity of again exhorting you to direct your attention.

But before I proceed, I must add a word more on the subject of these Memoirs of the Duc de St. Simon.

The lectures that I am now delivering, on the reign of Louis XIV. and on the regency of the Duke of Orleans, were written nearly twenty years ago, and I then naturally depended on the edition of the Memoirs of the Duc de St. Simon which had just been published; a new edition is now, at the close of 1829, making its appearance, being the real Memoirs that were drawn up by the *Duke* himself, and which are now given to the world by the *Marquis* de St. Simon, from the original MS. in the possession of the editors. The fact seems to have been that the duke had put together eleven folio volumes of papers, manuscript and printed, which he made the materials of his Memoirs; from these eleven volumes, that were lodged in the Dépôt des Affaires Etrangers, an extract was made by the Abbé de Voisenon, in eight volumes quarto, and from this extract was made another extract, in three volumes octavo, with four of supplement; but these last seven volumes seem not to have satisfied the public, and on the breaking out of the French revolution, as I have mentioned, a new work was formed out of the eleven volumes folio, which is the work of which I have just described the contents, and on which I have hitherto relied. Upon comparing it with the edition now given to the world by the Marquis de St. Simon, I find no occasion to make any alteration in what I have said in my prior lectures; every thing that is in the old edition will be found somewhere or other in the new; but the expressions are sometimes a little modified, and slight omissions made; the whole, however, is new arranged, and much is added by the duke, many new personages are brought forward, many new scenes described, additional anecdotes given; on the whole, the work is now more than ever fitted to answer the purpose I have just mentioned, that of affording the reader a complete notion of the nature of the characters that are to be found under an absolute European monarchy. It is not too much to say, that while reading these volumes, we are as much placed by the side of

Louis and the regent, and passing our days in the midst of the court and courtiers by whom they were surrounded, as if we had lived at Versailles at the time. We hear of the deaths and the marriages, the characters and views of the parties, the fêtes and the balls, the intrigues, the gossip and scandal, the news, private and public, every subject, grave or gay, that has occurred, and all given by a very spirited observer, a man of sagacity and sense, and one the very child and creature of such scenes in every respect, except that he was a man of sincere religion and severe virtue.

It is true, that a description of this kind will differently affect men of different education and views; men of republican character will turn away from it with impatience and contempt; while, on the other hand, it will not be without its interest, or even its charm, to those who are fitted to take a part in such scenes by the elegance of their manners or the variety of their accomplishments; and even the philosopher, while he cannot approve (though he may feel the necessity of monarchy) such an exhibition of human nature, as this must be thought, will perhaps be content to consider it as an unfortunate exaggeration of what is in itself neither without its grace nor without its use; he will be ready to acknowledge, as the physical strength is always with the multitude, that ranks and distinctions, ceremonials and etiquettes (and therefore those of a court) are among the fences and safeguards of civilized society; that they silently and peacefully undermine and weaken the empire of brute force among mankind, and call into play other influences of a more intellectual, and therefore more elevated nature; and the only point of anxiety to such a philosopher will be, that the expense of the machinery be not too great, and the injury done to the natural feelings and affections of the heart not too deep and too extensive.

Certainly the court of Louis XIV. must always be considered as a very remarkable phenomenon in the history of the civilization of mankind; such, we may say, were our fellow creatures once, in the most distinguished portion, at the time of improving Europe; and what a curious spectacle, it may surely be added, is here displayed! under what strange, and often whimsical forms, does our common nature

here appear! our vanities, our frailties, and our follies, our noble qualities, our heroism, and our virtues, our genius, our religious feelings, all that is great in our composition, and all that is little, under what extraordinary aspects are they here presented! Who can wonder that the memoirs connected with these scenes should never want an interest, and to this hour should not want an interest to the readers in fashionable life; and even, if a real speculator on human nature, to the philosopher in the shade. But with reference to this new edition of St. Simon, the great misfortune is, that it is now extended to twenty volumes, and I have therefore to observe to you, with some satisfaction, that to each chapter there is a very good index, and by this means a selection of the topics that are most interesting may easily be made. The impression that was given me by the former work, has been now renewed and extremely strengthened. What my first impression was, you will see in the next lecture; from the present work, what I have chiefly brought away is a more strong sense of the misery and ruin of France, produced by the victories of Marlborough and Eugene; and of the terror and subdued state not only of Louis and his court, but still more of the common people of Paris, and, at the same time, of all intelligent men in the kingdom. Again, a very strong confirmation is afforded of the accuracy of the views of the Whig party in England. All this appears very strongly marked in the present production. And again, the minute and more endless detail of the new work makes more than ever striking the extraordinary system of etiquette that was established, and all the faults and prejudices not only of Louis, the monarch, but of St. Simon, the peer of France, himself.

The work, however, of St. Simon, it must be confessed, presents a task of considerable labour to the general reader, even though proper advantage is taken of the index, as I have already recommended; and I proceed, therefore, to mention a book which may be proposed not only as a sort of substitute, but as one which, on account of its own merits and popularity, must at all events be perused. This is the work of Du Clos. There is a good preface, and the author acknowledges his obligations to the Duke of St. Simon, whose

particular prejudices he states, and proposes to avoid. It is the history of men and manners, the spirit of the age which Duclos hopes to give; and the work is certainly very pleasing, the observations those of an acute and sensible writer. That part which relates to Louis XIV. is short; the work begins, unfortunately, at too late a period; it must be all read; and the second book, which contains, more especially, the author's estimate of Louis, should be well weighed.

After Duclos may be consulted a work lately published by Lacretelle; a history of France during the eighteenth century, to be connected with his late work on the French Revolution. Lacretelle is an author of reputation; the first book relates to the close of the reign of Louis XIV., and is very well worth reading.

But the most agreeable work of all is that of D'Anquetil, entitled, "Louis le Quatorze, sa Cour et le Régent." It is a work compiled from all the most interesting performances that relate to the general subject. Every thing that concerns Louis XIV. is touched upon, and in a manner the most easy and agreeable. But no subject can be said properly to be discussed; and with all the good sense of the author, it is entertainment, rather than philosophic instruction, that he affords. The work may be likened to a gallery of portraits, which a spectator is led along to look at, and when something interesting and appropriate has been said of each, he is left to depart. The work is prefaced by a valuable account of all the publications connected with the general subject, accompanied with a short critique on each. Both are, on every account, of great consequence to an English reader.

The student must, on the whole, remember that the kind of personal acquaintance which is desirable with all the more remarkable characters of this age, can only be acquired from this publication, which D'Anquetil seems to have devoted to that very purpose.

Among such characters must be numbered Madame de Maintenon, the mistress, or rather the wife of Louis. Such were her qualities, her talents, and her situation, that the particulars of her life form a part of the history of the times; and her memoirs must be read to make you thoroughly

acquainted with that monarch and that court, on whom, unfortunately, so much of the happiness of Europe at the time depended. Her memoirs, edited by Beaumelle (the book so decried by Voltaire), has been able to preserve its reputation, notwithstanding the censures and invectives of a writer so universally read and admired on the continent, as Voltaire. It is still considered by French scholars as giving an extremely good account of what it professes to describe, and as necessary to be read.

The reader must prepare himself to submit to the eternal praises of Madame de Maintenon, and he may contrast the unfavourable representations of St. Simon with the unlimited panegyrics of the writer of her memoirs.

There are several small volumes of her letters; some of the letters may be read. The student, after becoming acquainted with the history of the reign, will be at no loss to select a few for his perusal, judging of their contents from the persons to whom they are addressed. As parts of history, they are little interesting or instructive, but they are the letters of a woman of taste and good natural sense, placed in an extraordinary situation, connected with the leading personages, and influencing the events of a remarkable period. The letter to the Duchess of Burgundy may be mentioned as a favourable specimen of the writer and of the publication. Other letters have lately been published. You will see an account of them in the eighty-eighth number of the Edinburgh Review, by Sir James Mackintosh, and several curious and important historical notices which he has been able to select from them.

The work of Voltaire, the Age of Louis XIV., is well known, and has been long and universally admired; as it is not very long, and is every where written with liveliness and ease, it may be read with advantage twice; that is, after, as well as before the works I have alluded to. The great praise of Voltaire as an historian is, that he was the first who directed the attention of mankind to the more proper subjects of history—the arts, manners, and laws of every country, the progress of society, the history of human happiness; that he was the first who gave those general results, those comprehensive estimates which are the great lessons of statesmen.

Had he been born and educated under a free government, the great subjects of history would in all probability have been all of them regularly and gravely discussed; and much of what may now be objected to him in the way of defect or fault would then, as I conceive, not have appeared. In writing the age of Louis XIV. he had every possible advantage. He was about twenty-one when Louis died; he had all the information, oral and written, within his reach, and he lived at a distance of time when he could investigate the truth, and estimate the importance of every thing before him.

Voltaire is a writer whose expressions always convey his thoughts very clearly to his reader, and he treats particular subjects separately; yet it still appears to me very difficult to draw any distinct results from those of his chapters, more particularly, which are connected with subjects of political economy and ecclesiastical affairs; and if this observation be just, it is an important fault in this celebrated performance.

The work has been noticed in a general manner by Lacretelle in his third volume. Lacretelle considers it as an effort of Voltaire in the cause of all that heroism, elevation of character, and good taste, which Voltaire conceived to be on the decline when he drew up his work. Lacretelle supposes him to have been desirous to display, at the same time, the striking influence of letters and the arts, and to have hoped to animate his countrymen to the imitation of the virtues of Turenne, Catinat, and Fénélon, and the splendid qualities of Louis XIV. The work, when it appeared, was received with enthusiasm; the situation of Louis XV. and of the court at the time, gave a new interest, and secured a ready reception and applause for whatever could revive the remembrance of the brilliant scenes and imposing character of his predecessor.

In later times it has been thought not quite to satisfy the French scholars, as being, after all, rather a general view and outline of this interesting era, than a complete and well digested history; but it is possible that on the subject of their *grand monarque*, nothing that was not intolerably minute and tedious would have satisfied such critics. An English student may rest contented when he finds that its general

merits are acknowledged, and when he hears it confessed that no better work on the subject has ever yet been produced.

The constant merit of Voltaire is the ease and beauty of his narrative, the agreeable and often valuable observations with which it is accompanied; above all, that he never trifles with the time of his reader.

The great objections to the work will be sufficiently apparent to all but Frenchmen, and are not such as Frenchmen at any former period would have discovered.

But of late, when a new order of things was beginning to appear, the celebrated Condorcet, while writing the life of Voltaire, thought it necessary to declare, that this renowned author, in his Age of Louis XIV., had certainly sacrificed too much to the prejudices of his youth.

But a far greater and more constant fault of Voltaire, in his historical writings, is a never ceasing disposition to place every thing in a lively point of view.

To the production of this species of dramatic effect it cannot but happen that the dull precision of facts must be sometimes sacrificed—characters and events must be strained into an antithesis; they must be huddled up together into a general estimate; they must be disposed of by a stroke of satire or a witticism; they must "point a moral, or adorn a tale." All this may be entertaining: it always is; but it is not always history; the representation and remarks of Voltaire must be therefore received at all times with hesitation and distrust. It must be confessed, however, that the reader will be surprised to find, on further examination, as Dr. Robertson appears to have been, how often this most amusing of writers has authorities for his facts, and proper foundations on which to rest the liveliness of his sallies, and the instruction of his remarks.

On the whole, Voltaire's Age of Louis XIV. may be studied by an English reader, as conveying the most full and distinct impression that can be found of the nature of the French character; of the character of the government, the monarch, the nobles, the generals, the courtiers, and women of quality, and of the whole nation, when found in the state that is to them most natural and agreeable; in short, of the great

edifice which was in the first place levelled to the earth by the French Revolution.

When works like these, the publications of the French nation, have been read, they must be afterwards compared with the writings of our own country. The whole picture will then be complete, and not before. With our own authors, the constant theme of reprobation is the ambition of Louis XIV., and the miseries it occasioned. It cannot be expected that this ambition will be very properly criticised by the French writers, or even the personal faults of the monarch very accurately estimated; yet more is said than could have been expected both by St. Simon and Duclos. Voltaire is always ready to raise his voice against war and intolerance, and therefore occasionally against the leading faults of the monarch, but by no means in a tone sufficiently strong; and he must be considered, on the whole, as the panegyrist rather than the historian, both of his countrymen and of Louis. Lacretelle had the advantage of writing since the Revolution, and it was therefore more easy for him both to discover and to state the unfavourable as well as the favourable characteristics of the reign.

Through the whole, however, of these French publications, a jealousy, not to say hatred, of England, and a passion for their own nation, is manifest, sometimes to a degree that annihilates, always to a degree that obscures in them, the more regular suggestions of propriety and candour, not to say all due consideration of the general rights and interests of Europe.

But these rights and interests of mankind ought never to be forgotten by any reader, above all, by the readers of a free country. On the continent, the state whose liberties were more immediately in peril was Holland, but the power that could best be opposed to Louis, to preserve the balance of Europe, was the House of Austria. In conjunction, therefore, with the accounts of the French writers and those of our own country, some idea ought to be formed of the situation of that House, and of the empire; and the work of Mr. Coxe on this occasion very opportunely presents itself. As this part of it is very concise, and founded on the best authorities,

I recommend it to be read at the same time with the works before mentioned. They will be found all to illustrate each other, and united, to be sufficient to give you, as I conceive, a very full view of the whole subject.

But I must now recommend to you a book, which you might not perhaps have expected me to mention as a portion of historic reading—the Adventures of Telemachus. The connexion, however, of this celebrated work with the general subject now before us, and its own separate importance, may be easily described to you.

One of the subjects which occupies the history and the memoirs of this period is the education and character of the Duke of Burgundy, the grandson of Louis, the presumptive heir to the crown.

The merits of the duke will be found to illustrate by contrast all the faults of Louis; to exhibit to the view in various ways all the objectionable parts of the king's character and administration.

The Duke of Burgundy, originally debased by every evil propensity, and distinguished by every unfortunate habit, that could have rendered him the disgrace and dread of his country, became, at last, by the happy influence of his own reflections and of wise and good men, who laboured for his improvement, the hope and promise of France, and indeed of Europe. This is a fact that may keep us from lightly despairing of ourselves or others; it may really be regarded as a problem whether, if the duke had lived and come to the throne, the late French Revolution would have occurred. Fénélon was his instructor, and the character of the prelate becomes on that account more than ever interesting. It is given at great length by St. Simon, and appears in all the books I have recommended.

The subsequent events, the late Revolution in France, may naturally awaken in us some curiosity to know what could have been the communications that passed between such a preceptor and such a pupil; what could have been the lessons of instruction that were offered by the virtuous prelate to the grandson of such a jealous and despotic prince as Louis XIV.

Some idea may be formed from the book I have mentioned

—the Telemachus. This work, by a lucky accident, has reached us; it was not intended for the public eye.

We may have already perused it as an elevated sort of novel, as an inferior sort of epic poem; but, for the reasons I have mentioned, there are parts of it which fall within the province of historical reading. No doubt the general topics of instruction that are here supposed to be addressed to the son of Ulysses must have been insisted upon by the bishop in his private conferences with his illustrious pupil. It is to these that I would wish you to advert. By looking over the arguments affixed to the different books, it will be easy to select particular topics of this nature, and to meditate them, without reading those descriptions and narratives which might once have appeared to us the more interesting portion of the work.

It cannot be expected that the lessons of the prelate should be other than of a very general nature; but the subjects chosen are the right subjects—the importance of the distribution of justice, of a sincere and active interest in the happiness of the community, the temptations to which all princes are exposed, their necessary defects, the great merit of candour and docility, the difficulty with which they can escape from flatterers, how seldom they search for men of wisdom and virtue; unless they do, how impossible it is that the wise and the virtuous should approach them; the importance of frugality in a state; of morality; of religion; and the lesson which the bishop seems to have had, above all others, at heart, is the invaluable nature of the blessing of peace, and how inseparable is the love of it from the character of every intelligent and virtuous ruler. On the whole, the maxims of government which the prelate presents to the reception of the duke, are all of a mild and enlightened cast, and well fitted to contribute to the happiness of the community. The most material omission seems, at first sight, to be, that no notice is taken of the value of representative assemblies, in all forms of government. The bishop must have known that they were a regular part of the constitution of his own country, and in our own neighbouring island of England, he had seen a most desirable revolution effected by means of them without bloodshed or disorder. But he discusses neither their merits nor their

defects; and, without entering into any specific exemplification of his own political principles, seems to think it sufficient to inculcate them in a general manner, to inspire his pupil, if possible, with the proper tone and sentiment, and to leave the application to his own discernment of fit seasons and circumstances.

And this was perhaps the best and only course. To have attempted more than this would have been most probably to have defeated his own intentions. What he wrote in his work was sufficiently strong to be considered, in many places, as a satire on Louis XIV., and many have supposed that Fénélon was nominated, or rather banished to a bishoprick at Cambray, not so much because his religious heresies as because his political instructions were disrelished by the court. It is certain that the Duke of Burgundy was himself animated with the most lively interest in the welfare of the community; and there is a remarkable letter of Madame de Maintenon among those which have been given to the public, in which she tells the Duke of Bouvilliers that the king, on the death of the prince, the Duke of Burgundy, had looked over his papers, and had committed every thing that came from Fénélon to the flames; no slight testimony to the merit of the bishop.

But the Telemachus is to be considered on another account. It has been represented as containing the principles of that more improved system of political economy, which, under the auspices of Adam Smith, has been for some time slowly, and at last rapidly making its way not only into the deliberations of cabinets, but even into the understanding of the public. There is certainly merit of this kind in the work of Fénélon, merit which must be considered as very great, when we reflect that he was thinking on these subjects, and in general thinking reasonably, at the very time that the celebrated Colbert, the minister of France, was proceeding upon a more obvious, and then an established system directly the reverse. Colbert was marshalling from his desk, as he flattered himself, the industry of mankind by the powers of legislation, and supposing that he could move his pen, as a magician would his wand, and by bounties and drawbacks, and by the encouragement of the state (as he called it), raise up wealth and happiness at his pleasure.

The ideas of the good bishop were far more just and profound. On account of the importance of the subject of political economy, I will give an instance or two; and I do this he rather, I confess, to take the chance of attracting your thoughts to this great subject—the science of national prosperity, a subject that will hereafter often and deeply occupy your minds, if you come to be men of reflection and benevolence. I am at the close of my lecture, but one or two points may be mentioned; and I will take those that are among the most important in the science.

"Instruct me," says Telemachus in the third book, "how I may establish in Ithaca commerce like that of the Tyrians. The true way, replies Narbas, is to receive all strangers readily; let them find in your ports safety, accommodation, perfect freedom; above all, do not attempt to restrain commerce by directing it according to your own notions. Let the prince have no concern in it. He will be sufficiently enriched by the riches which commerce will bring into his dominions. It is with commerce as with some springs; attempt to change their course, and you dry them up." To write thus at the period when Fénélon wrote, was no doubt extraordinary merit.

It is not to be expected that in the infancy of the science of political economy, Fénélon should be entirely accurate. Thus he says, "the true secret of gaining much is, not to wish to gain too much." Adam Smith could say nothing better—nothing that more completely opposes those custom house statesmen who draw forth all the machinery of bounties and restrictions, and vainly hope to make their own nation rich by keeping every other nation poor; that is, to enrich the tradesman by impoverishing his customers. But the bishop immediately subjoins these words,—"and by knowing the proper moment when to lose." Here Fénélon seems not to be quite aware that if the intercourse is spontaneous, neither nation can ever lose; that the very existence of the traffic, if no laws have interfered, is of itself a sufficient indication that not only one, but that both parties more or less profit by it; that to suppose that the gain of the one is the loss of the other, is the great and important mistake of the whole subject.

The next striking feature of the system of Fénélon is the earnestness with which he lays down the paramount import-

ance of agriculture. "The reason of the happy change which you see is that agriculture is had in honour, and that the lands are well cultivated. The true force and the true riches of a community depend on the number of the people and the abundance of provisions." But Fénélon next proceeds to lay down the fatal evils of luxury; and when he comes to the remedy of these evils, he becomes a Colbert in his turn; he makes, in the first place, a distinction between those arts which are superfluous and those which are liberal; vainly proposing to expel the one and retain the other. He then goes on to state, that in such a case the taste and manners of a nation must be changed. But how? Why, says he, new laws must be established; as if men could be made moderate in their desires or reasonable in their fancies by edicts and commands. This is little to understand this important subject, the nature of the human mind, or the principles on which the exertions of mankind, mental and corporeal, i. e. their prosperity and their happiness really depend. A proper estimate of this particular subject of luxury, and the more peculiar vices of civilization (a very curious and indeed difficult subject), must be derived neither from the licentious Mandeville, who undertook to prove, with great powers of lively, though coarse declamation, that private vices are public benefits, nor the eloquent Rousseau, nor the pure and elevated Fénélon, but from the essays of the reasoning Hume—those, for instance, on commerce and on refinement in the arts.

Fénélon seems himself almost to abandon his confidence in laws and edicts, and to modify in the next sentence the nature of his political prescription. "Who," says he, "can undertake a reformation like this, but some philosophic king; one who would by his own example shame the ostentatious prodigality of others; one who would encourage the wise by the sanction of his authority in their honourable frugality?"

It is instructive to see the mind of Fénélon labouring with the difficulties of the great problem of rendering the people happy by good government. His general notions I have already alluded to; they are stated with still greater regularity in his twelfth book. He depends too much on the operation of laws; is too ready to interfere with regulations of this kind; and his plans, which could not be carried into effect in a small

state, nor attempted in a large one, are after all inconsistent with many of the leading and vital principles of public prosperity and freedom. One important mistake seems to be this: he supposes that the earth will always continue to produce sufficient food for the inhabitants, if properly cultivated, yet, in the progress of his speculations, we find him at last obliged to regulate the extent of ground which each family is to possess, and, still pursued by difficulty, finally to propose that when the land of any particular society of men is insufficient for their proper support, colonies should be sent abroad; but this is only to adjourn the difficulty one stage more. What at length are the colonies to do?

This is to cut the knot, not untie it; and they who would learn the real nature of this great problem of human prosperity, the difficulties with which it has to struggle, and the kind of assistance which it may receive from the exertions of self-denial and virtue in individuals, and from the operation of wise counsels in the legislature, must meditate long and anxiously the works of Adam Smith and Mr. Malthus.

I may mention, as I am concluding my lecture, that there have been some books published by Mr. Butler on the subject of Fénélon, the Gallican church, and other topics connected with this and the subsequent reign.

They are highly deserving of your consideration, and they are a sort of literary curiosity, as it seems to have been the object of the author—I speak not of his controversial but his historic works—to give the greatest possible quantity of information in the least possible compass, a very novel idea, not likely to be very popular in Paternoster Row.

## LECTURE II.

### LOUIS XIV.

IN my last lecture I endeavoured to give you an account of such histories and memoirs as might convey an adequate notion of a monarch so celebrated as Louis XIV., and an era so remarkable as that in which he flourished.

The subject will be found very extensive, even if contracted within the least possible limits; it is impossible now, in the slightest degree, to conceive the impression that was once made on Europe by this extraordinary king of this extraordinary people; in times less interesting than our own, the subject might occupy, as I do not doubt it often has occupied, even a large portion of the life of men of literature and science.

I cannot advise this, in the present situation of human knowledge and human affairs; it is certainly fitted to afford you much entertainment and instruction, but when these have been derived, I would recommend you to hasten on to other characters and other periods, which have also a claim on your curiosity and diligence.

The reign of Louis was very long, and the history of the reign is the history of Europe.

In like manner, the particulars respecting the monarch himself are innumerable; no detail, therefore, either of the one or the other can be here attempted.

I will, however, select from the history two subjects for your reflection, which, whenever remembered, will always revive in your mind a very strong and proper impression of the real character of this celebrated prince, and always prevent you from being too much deceived by his showy qualities, and even his solid claims to your approbation.

The two subjects that I shall select from the history are,—

first, the revocation of the edict of Nantz; second, the burning of the Palatinate.

The revocation of the edict of Nantz is a subject with which, as Protestants, as Englishmen, as readers of history, you cannot be too well acquainted. No event ever excited a greater sensation in Europe; as such it must be considered attentively by those who read history.

But it deserves also your meditation as a very striking specimen of the evils of intolerance. The evils which this great measure of national intolerance produced were very striking, and are acknowledged. And similar evils every measure of national intolerance has a tendency to produce.

We do not say that states are not to support or defend their establishments; but we say that it is the practice of men, even in the best of times, to defend them by harsh and unnecessary, and therefore by unjust and unwise expedients; that in concerns of this nature the members of the superior sect are always deplorably selfish or unreasonably timid.

The edict of Nantz was the final adjustment of the religious wars in France; the terms that were procured for the Huguenots by Henry IV. When Louis therefore revoked this edict, he in fact declared that he would keep terms with this part of his subjects no longer.

There is a very striking chapter on this subject of the revocation by the Duc de St. Simon, where he reprobates this measure with all the warmth of an enlightened statesman, and all the indignant feeling of a lover of truth and a man of humanity. His sentiments are in part transferred by D'Anquetil to his own work. This unjust and cruel revocation is likewise noticed in very proper terms by Beaumelle, in his Memoirs of Madame de Maintenon, and again briefly in Duclos. Voltaire has also treated the subject in his chapter on Calvinism, in his Age of Louis XIV. His account of the more early conduct of the Huguenots seems not sufficiently favourable. He may indeed be always suspected of surveying the *comparative* merits of different sects with too much indifference to treat them with relative justice; and this indifference will operate unfavourably to the oppressed sect; yet the chapter, on the whole, does him honour, particularly if we consider the early period of life at which it was written,

and the age and nation to which he belonged. The criminality of Louis is sufficiently apparent even from this representation of his biographer.

There is a regular and professed work on this subject—the History of the Edict of Nantz, printed in Holland, and published a few years after the revocation. These volumes must be considered as a statement of the whole of the case of the members of the reformed church, drawn up, probably, by one of themselves. The preface of this work should at least be read. At the end of the fifth volume will be found a collection of edicts, and other official documents, that sufficiently tell their own story.

From all these books and treatises, however, I will content myself with giving you one extract only; it is from St. Simon. Observe his assertions, observe the manner in which he describes the effects of this revocation; he lived at the time. "In this way," says he, "without the slightest pretext, the slightest necessity, was one-fourth of the kingdom to be depopulated; its trade to be ruined; the whole country to be abandoned to the public and avowed pillage of dragoons; the innocent of both sexes were to be devoted to punishment or torture, and that by thousands; families were to be stripped of their possessions; relations armed against each other; our manufactures to be transferred to strangers, and the world was to see crowds of their fellow-creatures proscribed, naked, fugitive, guilty of no crimes, and yet seeking asylum in foreign lands, not in their own country, which was in the mean time subjecting to the galleys and to the lash the noble, the affluent, and the aged, the delicate and the weak, and in many cases those who were distinguished for their piety, their knowledge, and their virtue; and all this on no other account than that of religion: and still further to enhance the horrors of such proceedings, in this manner was every province to be filled with sacrilegious or perjured men; those who were forced, or those who pretended willingly to conform, and who sacrificed their consciences to their worldly welfare and repose; nay, such in the result were the abominations thus produced by obsequiousness and by cruelty, that the same space of twenty-four hours was sufficient not unfrequently to conduct men from tortures to abjuration, from abjuration to the holy

communion; and an unhappy sufferer found a conductor and a witness, on these occasions, often in the person of the common hangman."

A melancholy history this! of which St. Simon proceeds still further to give the detail—a detail in which I need not follow him.

The king, it seems, received from all quarters the most soothing accounts of the conversions that had been effected; two thousand in one place! six thousand in another! congratulated himself on the wonders achieved by his piety and his power; and flattered himself, says St. Simon, that he had renewed the times, and rivalled the glory of the first propagators of Christianity.

The revocation of the edict of Nantz is memorable in the history of mankind; and, fortunately for the interests of humanity, those who had to be exiles from their native land, and to fly for refuge to strangers, were in general men of such industrious habits and useful occupations, men so meritorious and so ingenious, that the impolicy of the measure was even more glaring than might at the time, perhaps, appear its injustice. As such it has remained in the eyes of posterity. Its impolicy has become a sort of by-word among the nations of Europe; and the most uninformed and unenlightened man has never, from this period, wanted an instance sufficiently strong to strike his understanding, and to show him how great are the mistakes which may be committed in this important subject of the management of religious sects.

For some time the influence of this measure was favourable to the world, though perhaps not so much in this as in another respect. It inspired every state in Europe with a hatred of Louis, which materially assisted William III. not only in his efforts to establish the freedom of England, but at all times in his laudable ambition to resist the unlawful ambition of Louis; but this revolution, in its more natural and immediate effect, that of conveying an awful warning against intolerance, probably neither had at the time, nor ever will have, all the influence which it ought to have on the reflections of mankind.

Indeed the effect produced for a long time was rather of an opposite nature.

The two sects were but the more inflamed against each

other. The Protestants naturally supposed that the bigotry of their Roman Catholic opponents had no limits, and that they were justified in defending themselves, and in establishing by any possible means their own predominancy. This could not be done without legal provisions and enactments of a very horrible nature in the first instance, and which were to remain on statute books long after the reasons which gave occasion to them had ceased to exist. Consequences like these could not be favourable to the general principles of toleration,—these principles were in many instances grossly violated; and mankind have been subsequently benefited by the example of the edict of Nantz, only in the way I have already described, in showing the impolicy of intolerance rather than the injustice of it. The impolicy at least was visible—for to England and other countries were driven in exile many of the most valuable and respectable artisans and families of France.

I now proceed to the second subject, which I proposed to select as a specimen of the character of Louis,—the burning of the Palatinate.

The student will find, if he reads the history, that in order to distress the enemy for provisions this fine country was to be converted into a desert. In the midst of winter the whole population was to be driven by the military from their habitations; and while these hapless beings were to leave behind them their towns and villages in flames, they were to wander forward—the aged and the helpless—to seek food and shelter in whatever manner and in whatever country they thought best. A monster, says Lamontey, has been found to applaud the massacre of St. Bartholomew, but none ever to excuse the burning of the Palatinate.

It is sometimes said that Louis was not harsh in his nature, or intentionally cruel, though his minister was. It is indeed difficult to suppose that he was. There are anecdotes mentioned in different books of memoirs, one more particularly in St. Simon, which enable us to entertain more favourable ideas of his character. But the lesson to be derived from these outrages is only rendered more striking and instructive, if such be the fact.

These orders, which Attila might have issued from his camp, were dispatched by Louis from his palace at Versailles, from

the midst of his fêtes and spectacles—while he was surrounded by every thing which could awaken his senses to pleasure, and harmonize his mind to happiness.

The imagination of the monarch, amid the various artifices of bliss which his situation afforded, was employed, it should seem, in a manner too agreeable to turn aside and survey all the repulsive spectacles of misery which his abominable orders could not fail to occasion.

Not referring therefore at this moment, as I naturally might, to the indignation and horror which such atrocious proceedings will necessarily excite in your minds, I shall make a remark rather of a collateral nature, on account of what I conceive to be its practical importance.

The remark is indeed familiar to you, but may strike you more when made to you on an occasion like the present.

It is—the unfortunate effect of affluence more or less upon every one of us; the manner in which we are made to participate, in a certain degree, the insensibility of Louis.

The delicacies of food and clothing, for instance, are enjoyed with little concern for those to whom the necessaries of life are scarcely attainable; and it has thus passed into a proverb, that one half of the world knows not what becomes of the other. One of our first moral writers has been pleased to speak in a manner somewhat disrespectful of those moralists and poets, like Thomson, who have noticed and lamented this disposition in the human mind, to enjoy its own blessings rather than disquiet itself with the calamities of others. I allude to Adam Smith—but was he well employed on this occasion? It is the province of sympathy to render us alive to the evils of those around us. This he would admit. So is it equally the province of reason and good sense to save the mind from too deep an interest in afflictions which we can neither prevent nor remedy. This we concede on our part. No doubt, therefore, it is the perfection of the human character to be at once equal to its own happiness, and yet sensible to those miseries of our fellow-creatures which its exertions can alleviate. But surely it remains to be remarked, that it is not in any deficiency of attention to *ourselves* that human nature offends. This is not the weakness of mankind, or the aspect under which they need be regarded by a moralist

with any pain. If there be sometimes found those who are formed of a finer clay, so as really to have the comforts of their own existence diminished and interrupted by sympathizing too long and too quickly with the calamities of those around them, such may surely be considered as exceptions to be set apart from their fellow mortals, as those more amiable beings, who are not likely by their example to injure the general cause of reasonable enjoyment in the world; and whom the more natural prevalence of careless selfishness renders it not easy often to find, and surely not very possible long to censure.

Having now presented to your remembrance two particular subjects so necessary to a proper estimate of Louis XIV., I will next endeavour to propose to you a system of arrangement which may enable you the better to form a general notion of the vast assemblage of events and circumstances which belong to the character of this renowned monarch and this most memorable era.

In reading therefore the various works to which I have referred, it will I think contribute to give you a clearer idea of the whole, if you consider Louis XIV. under three different aspects: 1st, His conduct with respect to those more immediately around him—his personal character. 2dly, His conduct to his people—his character as the sovereign of France. 3dly, His conduct with respect to surrounding states—his character as one of the great potentates of Europe.

All these subjects are necessarily connected with each other; in strict propriety they cannot be well separated; and the discussion of the one immediately runs into references to some one of the other. But there may still be some advantage in keeping them as much apart as the nature of things will allow; and, in considering the whole subject as made up of these three parts, to each of which the student may more immediately turn, as the particular object of his studies at the time requires.

The personal character of Louis affords a striking specimen of the virtues and vices that may result from an extreme sensibility to praise; his vanity, his pride, his love of applause and his love of glory are continually presented to the reader.

As this sensibility to praise is found more or less in every

man; and though given us by our Creator for the wisest purposes, liable like every other principle of our nature to be abused, it may not be amiss briefly to state the three leading distinctions that belong to the subject. These distinctions are often neglected, or not seen; and as one of the uses of history is to improve the moral character, as well as to enlighten the political views of the student, I may perhaps be allowed to turn for a moment from the one to the other, more particularly as I am addressing myself to the young, to those whose dispositions may be considered as now in the very act of assuming the tone and direction, which may materially influence their subsequent happiness and usefulness to the community.

The highest merit is to learn and practise virtue for its own reward: not indeed to be insensible to the praise of others; to receive it when reasonably offered, and even to enjoy it; but to receive it and enjoy it rather as a good that is properly an *attendant* on the performance of meritorious actions, than as the original *object* to be attained by them—as an attendant on good actions, not the object of them. In this manner the character is kept modest and reasonable, and is left susceptible of the highest motives which can be inspired by virtue and religion; and yet it is not required from any man to make vain efforts to exclude from his feelings that co-incident pleasure which we are by nature formed to derive from the applause of our fellow creatures: so to understand virtue and so to practise it seems the highest merit.

The next merit is to perform good actions from the love of true glory; that is, from sensibility to praise, but to praise bestowed on actions that are themselves praiseworthy, that are really meritorious, and the proper objects of moral approbation. This, though not the highest merit of which human nature is capable, is still merit.

What I have now, in the third and last place, to mention, is, sensibility to praise, *however* procured; to praise when given to actions, whether meritorious or not; when even given by *mistake* to supposed qualities or actions not really existing. To this last description of sentiment belongs vanity, under all its whimsical, contemptible, and prevailing forms; to the second (the love of true glory) belongs self-estimation; to

the first (the love of virtue) belongs the high consciousness of purity and right.

In certain respects all these are connected with, and bordering upon, each other; and the confounding of them together, and the attributing indiscriminately to each, or to all, the praise or censure that belongs exclusively to some one of them, is the great fallacy of the licentious moralists, Rochefoucault and Mandeville for instance.

It is the fault too, or mistake, often of men of the world; and of all who have more acuteness in their understandings, than kindness in their temperaments; a fault very visible in their writings, and for ever in their conversation.

These three descriptions of sentiment, which I have thus adverted to, are, however, all essentially different in themselves; and it is no unprofitable amusement for a philosophic mind to observe, in its own instance, and in the instances of others, the various combinations and alternations of these different principles,—the love of virtue, the love of true glory, and the love of mere praise.

It is the last, the love of mere praise, which is the original and first rude impulse of nature.

By education and reflection this is gradually improved into the second, the love of true glory; and at length elevated into the first, the love of virtue. But it may happen that this conversion of the one into the other, this happy improvement of the moral character, may never take place at all, or at least very imperfectly.

Of all mortals those who are the most unfortunately situated in this respect, and the *least* likely to receive this improvement, are the rulers of the earth, kings and princes, those who have a merit in the eyes of others, independent of their own personal good qualities; in like manner all who belong to the privileged orders of society, the nobility of a country, its gentry and men of family and distinction.

The same observations may even descend, more or less, to every man, who from any advantage whatever, not only of birth or fortune, but even of personal appearance, of beauty, strength, or activity, possesses any merit in the eyes of others which is not properly his own, any merit which he does not strictly earn by the superiority of his understanding, or of his virtues.

But if such be the situation of all beings, and of whatever sex, whether privileged by society or favoured by nature, it was more particularly so of Louis XIV.; and this is one of the lessons which his character affords. Louis was one of those rulers of the earth, who became a king while an infant, whose education was most defective, who was left ignorant, according to the account of St. Simon, to a degree that is quite astonishing; who was surrounded not only by courtiers and sycophants but by a nation, whose character, if analyzed, seems never to ascend beyond the merit of the second degree I have mentioned, the love of true glory, not often so high; whose character is much more generally moulded by the mere love *of* praise, *of* praise however procured.

As Louis was, unfortunately for the world, possessed also of a fine constitution and a handsome person, his moral improvement was rendered still more impossible; and the result, as seen in St. Simon, was precisely all that a speculator on human nature would have expected.

Eternally uneasy, and in action, as every man will be, who (though on a smaller scale), thinks of nothing but praise; eternally finding, or looking to find, an audience, before whom he might exhibit his performances; eternally at his levees or on his terraces, a sort of posture-master; the very rising and going to bed was with Louis a sort of drama; through the whole of the royal day he had his exits and his entrances; and whether he rode or walked, or dined or dressed, the whole world was supposed to be present, and the hero of the piece was Louis. Even at the hour of prayer, it was the *grand monarque* that was at his devotions; and no ideas, however awful, however overwhelming, could sweep away from his mind, even for a moment, the tinsel trumpery of human grandeur.

But Louis not only desired to live upon applause, but was enabled to do so. The applause was always ready, he had only to look and to receive it; and in the total absence of all that moral discipline which other human beings more or less find in the looks and words of those around them, no wonder that he became ungovernably selfish, a ridiculous egotist, so as even to join in singing his own panegyrics; no wonder that he was a slave to his passions, and that he at last conceived

not only that his own people, but that the world itself was intended merely to furnish out materials for what he was pleased to denominate, his glory.

It is remarkable how completely the French nation gave in to these delusions, how thoroughly they identified themselves with their monarch. They had lost their States-General, they had no houses of representation to convey any worthier images of the nation, or to furnish them with the materials of more dignified reflection; they had just emerged from the horrors of religious wars and the miseries of domestic confusion and dispute. Independent of these political circumstances, their own merits and faults, their wisdom and their follies, were all those of the young king; their virtues the same, the same their vices. Praise is with them to be acquired, if by proper means, well, but at all events to be acquired. The cause therefore of both was common; their sympathies with their monarch, their excuses for his conduct were always ready; and their property, their lives, their talents, and their genius, all became the instruments of his power, and were wielded at his pleasure to the purposes of his own gratification and aggrandizement.

And this leads me to the second aspect under which he is to be viewed. What was he to his people? To them he has often been considered as a benefactor; at least it has been thought that France, as a great kingdom, is under lasting obligations to him. This may be admitted, but must then be understood in a certain limited sense.

For instance, the religious and civil wars, and long years of contest, hatred, and bloodshed, of private wrongs, and public executions, had left the French nation fierce and ferocious. Louis had the merit of civilizing them. This he did in the first place, as has been generally observed, by the arts and sciences which he encouraged and protected. But, again, he must have produced the same salutary effect in another way, one, not so generally noticed. For instance, he constantly exhibited in his own person, and in the persons of his ministers and officers, the whole power of the state, regularly asserted, exercised, and diffused all over the community; maintaining, every where, order, tranquillity, and the due execution of the laws of civil and criminal justice. On both accounts, therefore, he contributed to civilize France. This is

the most favourable point of view in which Louis can be surveyed. It is very creditable to Louis that, coming to the throne so young, and to a kingdom so situated as France then was, he was yet able to carry on the government without incurring any renewal of domestic confusion, or the apparent domination of any minister, by whose power or genius he was himself eclipsed. Again, under the influence of his personal qualities, the great feudatories of the state became no longer a dangerous description of men, ready to be themselves monarchs, but a mere court noblesse, dependent on the sovereign for their honours, distinctions, and often even their private fortunes. He could

"Grace with a smile and ruin with a frown."

Louis, in this respect, followed up, and indeed carried to excess, the original achievement of the great Henry and the triumphs of Richelieu; even the manners of the people were affected; and on the whole, the kingdom, in every respect, though not without some unfavourable collateral effects, was materially civilized. He had undoubtedly, at the same time, the very important merit of choosing able men for the various departments of the state. And this is not only at all times the best criterion of the merit of every prince, but it is more particularly so of Louis; from whose ignorance, vanity, pride, and impetuosity, no conduct so rational could have been expected.

It happened that during the reign of Louis the most celebrated men appeared that have ever adorned this great kingdom. And as they all seemed to move under the influence of his protection and encouragement, their glory has, in the general apprehension of mankind, been reflected on the monarch. Nor is this entirely unjust: however soberly we may estimate the influence of the great on the talents of those around them, and however powerful the effect, which we may ascribe, in affairs of this nature, to the mere operations of chance, merit, and even considerable merit, must still be left to Louis, when we consider all those very striking and successful exertions of genius and learning which are seen, under his auspices, to have illustrated his age and nation.

This, the great praise of Louis, has been seized upon by one

of his panegyrists. "Turenne," says he, "Condé, Luxemburgh, were his generals; Colbert, Louvois, Tourcy, were his statesmen; Vauban, his engineer; Perault constructed his palaces—they were adorned by Le Poussin and Le Brun; Le Notre laid out his gardens; Corneille and Racine wrote his tragedies; Molière, his comedies; Boileau was his poet; Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Massillon, were his preachers. It is in this august assemblage of men, whose fame can never die, that this monarch, whom they acknowledged as their patron and protector, presents himself to the admiration of posterity."

There is certainly something here to arrest us in the career of our censure, after travelling through all the strange and disgraceful disorders of the former reign. We see at length, a disciplined army, public order, authority every where vigilant and resistless; regular government duly administered through all its departments; habits of obedience and loyalty deeply engrafted, and thoroughly introduced into the national character. To these, the solid bases of this system, and of every system of government, must be added the more ornamental part—the paintings, the statues, the splendid vases, the libraries—all the rich and massy furniture, with which the great national edifice, the work of Louis XIV., was adorned; and we thus see, altogether presented to us, that magnificent whole, which so strongly impressed, which so entirely fascinated and overpowered not only the French people, but the people of all the kingdoms of Europe; and if no more remained to be told, the admiration of posterity might not only be demanded for Louis, but allowed. There is, however, much more to be told, and we must not, like the French people themselves at the time, be insensible to the serious faults which so obscured the merits of their *grand monarque*.

The great object of the administration of Louis was, from the first, to suffer nothing of weight or dignity to exist in the state, but what immediately emanated from the throne, or was visibly dependent on his pleasure. He wished himself to direct the marine, the army, and the finances; every where to be the spring and principle of every movement. The people were to have no other guardian of their happiness, the empire no other security; his ministers, his generals, no other patron

or protector; above all, there was to appear no representative of the national consequence and will but himself. The ancient assemblies of the community, the States-General, were at all events not to be summoned. "L'état, c'est moi" was his favourite phrase. He was in his own apprehension, as is very apparent from different passages in his works, a sort of divinity on earth, certainly the representative of the Divinity.

All this was but the result of his inordinate love of distinction, his total selfishness, and the contracted views which had resulted from an education originally defective. To accomplish this monopoly of all power and all consequence was the secret and entire labour of his life on every occasion—at the most frivolous entertainment as at the most important sitting of the cabinet. His ministers were therefore obliged to endeavour to direct his councils by contrivance and stratagem, and to deceive him into a belief that he was himself the origin of the plans which he only adopted. His nobility was to remain continually within the reach of his smiles or frowns, or they lost all their personal influence and weight. It was a sufficient accusation that he "never saw them," as he termed it.

Not only the nobility, but every person was to be kept in a state of constant subjection to his criticisms by an extensive system of espionage, which descended to the most disgraceful expedients, and entered into the detail of all the intrigues and silly adventures of the metropolis; he had a police that kept every person and every concern within his view; every being was to be fixed in his own exact station and office, and the movements of every mind and body that approached the court, or enjoyed any distinction there or elsewhere, were to be combined into a sort of harmony with those of the monarch, by the most widely extended and duly adjusted system of form and etiquette that was probably ever devised or executed: Louis and the court which I have thus described, were to meet and parade in palaces, whose extent and magnificence were to rival the romances of the imagination; even Nature herself was to be insulted and overpowered, to achieve the wonders of Versailles; the sums expended are understood to have increased in so frightful a manner that the king at last threw the accounts into the fire; still, however, continuing them.

They had reached more than sixty millions of our money; the very roofs of this palace would cover a surface of twenty-five French acres; similar prodigality was exhibited at Marly, and his rage for expensive buildings was quite a characteristic and a most criminal one of his reign. All this was fitted to produce what it did produce, the spectacle which I have already described, as so striking to all Europe, and as so deserving of the curiosity and reflection of every reader of history; the best specimen that can be shown of the court and the administration of an arbitrary monarch, on the European, not Asiatic model, but without any representative bodies of the people, or indeed of the nobility; the spectacle of a great kingdom advanced to a situation in some respects of an enviable, and in most respects of a very imposing appearance;—opulent cities, spacious roads, canals and ports and harbours, arsenals and dockyards, every apparatus, naval and military, for attack or defence;—academies, hospitals, public buildings and palaces;—manufactures, arts and sciences;—statesmen, theologians, philosophers, historians, and antiquarians, orators and poets;—much of the accommodation, much of the embellishment, all the outward magnificence of civilization. All this is certainly to be found, and gave rise to what was called the Age of Louis XIV.; and it seems at first sight too presumptuous to say that all this is still insufficient, to say that civilization can realize something still more valuable to the community, and more dignified to the monarch; yet such is assuredly the truth; and it is no improper indulgence of national pride to say, that in consequence of our public assemblies, and more particularly of our representative assembly, our House of Commons, more, and even far more than all this, striking and splendid as it may be, is undoubtedly to be found in this distinguished island of our own.

It might perhaps be too much to have expected from Louis a foresight of the danger as well as knowledge of the injustice of his system; a consciousness that though the grandeur of his reign could not be denied, the solidity was doubtful, that the bubble might at any moment burst, that all was false and hollow, and that no government was really safe which violated the common feelings and reason of mankind. But the whole

is a memorable illustration of this great maxim in political science; a striking spectacle for the instruction of posterity. The lesson may be said to commence with the destruction of the free constitution of France by Louis XI. and Richelieu, to have proceeded along with the confirmation of arbitrary power, which was advanced to an elaborate and perfect system by Louis XIV., and to have terminated in the awful catastrophe that has happened in our own times.

An enlarged philosophy of this kind it might have been too much to have required from a prince so educated and so situated as Louis; but though he might not have discovered the true and best foundations of the security and grandeur of his monarchy, still he might have understood the obvious interests of his people, the ruinous nature of his passion for military glory and expense, and the more than ordinary wickedness of his unprincipled ambition.

On the contrary, to advert now to the third consideration, his relation to foreign states, Louis was long the terror of the civilized world; he was long considered as the tyrant that menaced the liberties of Holland and every kingdom that he could overpower; as the monarch who had entertained thoughts even of universal empire.

But what was to be the result? At home a system of taxation was to be urged on to the most oppressive expedients; peasants were to be hunted down and seized, to be forcibly enlisted in the armies: abroad, Holland, England, Europe were to be attacked or insulted; a succession of battles was to be fought, attended with the most frightful carnage; that is, the industrious were to be impoverished, the tender were to mourn, and the brave were to die, because Louis was to be called great, because Louis had chosen to be enrolled among the conquerors of the earth! It is surely difficult to love, it is surely strange to admire a monarch like this. Of the last forty-eight years of his reign, twenty-nine were years of war; more than a million of men were sacrificed; the state was so reduced that the very servants of the king, covered with his liveries, asked alms at the doors of his palace at Versailles.

He had scarcely begun to reign when he assumed those imperious and menacing airs which indicated but too clearly what Europe had to expect.

The invasion of the Franche Compté followed in 1668, and of Holland in 1672; and so insolent was his conduct, so unreasonable and so unjust, that he enabled William, the great hero of the liberties of mankind, to form, in opposition to his designs, the celebrated league of Augsburg. Ten years of war, bloody and ruinous both to France and Europe, followed; and the character of Louis had been now so displayed, and its ambition so well understood, that the will of the king of Spain, which gave the Spanish crown to one of the younger princes of his family, was resisted by Europe, and gave occasion to the war of the Succession—the war which was so marked by the triumphs of Marlborough and Eugene, and which had almost reduced Louis to contend for his crown, and France for its independence, at the very gates of Paris.

These, the leading measures of his reign, form, united, a most dreadful indictment against him; and it is impossible to distinguish such a monarch from any other of those mistaken and guilty mortals who have so misused their power as to deserve every mark of disgust and reprobation which can be inflicted upon them by the historian and by the thinking part of mankind.

On his death-bed, when it was now indeed but too late, when, as one of our old divines expresses it, "the phantastic images of self-love are removed, and the gay remembrances of vain opinion and popular noises;" at this awful period the monarch seems to have been conscious, if not entirely of his fault, at least that he had much mistaken the first duties of a sovereign. "My child," says he to the dauphin, "seek peace as the source of every good; avoid war as the source of every evil. My example in this respect is not a good one; do not imitate it; it is that part of my life and reign which I most repent."

But how strong must have been the reasons for repentance before they could have reached the infatuated mind of a monarch like Louis.

France is understood never to have recovered from the efforts which she made to gratify the pride and injustice of her sovereign.

The punishments of kings and nations are sometimes awful in their ultimate, though not immediate accomplishment.

Louis found himself and his empire advanced at one period of his reign to the highest point of what he conceived to be human glory. In a century afterwards his monarchy was at an end, and his descendant was expiring under the hand of the public executioner.—But I must now hasten to take leave of this celebrated age and its celebrated hero.

Madame de Genlis, in a preface to one of her beautiful compositions, the Memoirs of Madame de Valière, has endeavoured to assert the cause of this renowned monarch, and to present him to the love as well as the remembrance of mankind; but the character of her favourite has been already decided, and no new estimate, agreeable to her wishes, can now be procured. There is little (that I may briefly recapitulate what I have said), there is little in Louis to be loved, and not much that can properly be admired. He violated his most acknowledged duties; he was an adulterer, and even openly so; in the same carriage with him, and in presence of his armies, were seen his two mistresses and his queen. He found in Madame de Valière one whom he not only loved, but one who would have thought herself but too happy to have been loved by him; too happy, as he well knew, if she had been the object of his affection and choice in a private station, and had shared with him, and for his sake endured the obscurity of a cottage or the privations of the most laborious life; yet this mistress—his mistress in spite of all her sense of right and honourable feelings, this unfortunate lady, he saw consign herself to a living death in a cloister, only because he had abandoned her for another. What next ensued? This second object of his attachment he again abandoned for a third; an adulterer to his queen while she lived, and at last, by his connexion with Madame de Maintenon, subsiding into an anomalous and mixed situation of right and wrong, licentiousness and duty; too proud to be supposed a husband, too devout (as he imagined) to be a keeper, and at last only taught to know himself by the defeats of his generals, and the overwhelming calamities which he had brought upon his people. What is there here to be loved? What is there in the man, as a husband, a father, or a master, to interest our affections? What is there that we would wish to be found in the character of our children, our friends, or ourselves? As a

king, what are his praises? The reducing of his kingdom to order and civilization by the authority of his government; the selection of men of ability for his ministers; the protection of the fine arts; important merits these, no doubt; but these, are all.

If the maxims of government which he confirmed and established,—its revolting practices, his lettres de cachet, and his Bastile; if the spirit of ambition which he indulged and transmitted; if the habits of licentiousness and expense which he countenanced in his court; if the systems of taxation which he entailed on his people; if these could not fail immediately to produce the most severe calamities; if ultimately they produced the necessity, or at least gave occasion to the late dreadful revolution—if these points be admitted—and how are they to be contested?—it will be difficult to select from the whole course of history a single mortal whose follies have been so injurious, whose faults have been so fatal to his fellow-creatures as were those of Louis XIV.

The concluding scenes of the life of Louis are described with great minuteness by St. Simon. He died penitent, and was often observed joining his hands in prayer, and striking his breast while in the act of self-confession. I could wish you to turn to this particular portion of the Memoirs of the duke, not only because Louis is an example to show that after an ill-spent life the bitter hour of self-reproach must come, and this, whatever be the deceitful nature of the human heart (no man ever had one so deceitful as Louis), but because a youthful student can never be too strongly reminded of the transitory nature of every thing human; however he may value, and justly value, the proper enjoyments of this sublunary state, he must never forget that the pleasures, whether rational or not, of his existence, and his existence itself, in this world at least, must pass away.

He has seen Louis XIV. the idol and the master of the most brilliant court that Europe has ever witnessed; he has seen him surrounded by his mistresses, his ladies, and his courtiers, his statesmen and his generals, his artists and his bards, and he has now to see of all these things the awful and concluding lesson—

"To what complexion they must come at last."

Louis is to undergo the same appalling change which is the law of our common nature—Louis is to die.

The physicians are assembled, and they can afford no succour; the gens d'armerie are brought up, and at last they can no longer be reviewed, even from the window; the musicians cannot now be listened to, "charm they never so wisely;" the conversation of Madame de Maintenon and the ladies can interest no more; the king sits drowsy or asleep, and wakes confused; the pulse fails, and he lies on his royal bed helpless and expiring, fallen from his high estate, and his kingdom departing from him; a greater monarch than he has at last appeared, to whose dart, as he prepares to strike, his own earthly sceptre, if opposed, would be but a pigmy's straw; and this terrific being now marshals him the way he is to go, the way to that vale and shadow, glimmering on the confines of the present world and the future, which he is now to enter and which stands for ever open to receive the fleeting generations of mankind. It must be ever thus, and the poet, while musing in his churchyard path, repeats but the sentiment which might have been felt on the terraces of Versailles:—

> "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Await alike the inevitable hour;
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

I will make one observation more, not unconnected with the general subject of the reign, and conclude.

Literature and the arts flourished in the reign of Louis, as they did in that of Augustus. It has hence been made a question whether they flourish not under an arbitrary monarchy better than under a government, that is free; nor are there wanting reasons to show that this may be the case, and, at all events, it will be said, what reasoning like the fact?

But when this is made a question, it should be considered what is included under the terms of literature and the arts.

Literature and the arts can flourish while they disturb not the arbitrary maxims, civil or religious, which are adopted by the government under which they appear—but no longer.

This measured licence, however, this contracted indulgence, can never be favourable to the common cause of the genius of the human mind, which kindles by mutual sympathy in every

direction, and which can in this manner, and in this manner only, reach its full and natural perfection.

It is not considered how capricious and unjust may be the arbitrary monarch, even while he professes himself to be the patron of literature and the arts. Virgil could find a patron in Augustus, but Ovid experienced only a persecutor and a tyrant. The same despot who could give a donation to the Mantuan bard for the compliment to Marcellus, could tear away the author of the Metamorphoses from the splendours of Rome, and the delights of polished society, and cast him out upon the snows of Thrace amid the barbarians that surrounded the Euxine; his complaints, the tender and elegant Tristia, that were written from the desolate wastes of these inhospitable regions, have never ceased to move every reader of sensibility and taste, but they could produce no impression on the master of an arbitrary government; and the hapless poet, sickening under the sensations of hope deferred, at last despaired, and confessed that his genius had been his ruin.

"Ingenio perii Naso poeta meo."

Virgil, however, and Ovid might both have sung in courts and capitals, where Tacitus could not have thought; and the pages of this philosophic historian will now for ever attest the connexion that subsists between the genius and the freedom of the human mind. The same great truth was again felt, even under all the patronage of a court, by Longinus. In every age and succeeding period of the world the conclusion is the same. Raphael and Michael Angelo might have adorned palaces and temples with all the forms of sublimity and beauty, in cities where Galileo could not have unveiled the science of the heavens, nor Luther laid open the book of life. Under Louis XIV., in like manner (the celebrated patron of every muse), Boileau, and Poussin, and Bossuet, and other illustrious men, divines, and artists, and poets could find emoluments and distinctions; but Fénélon had to be removed to a distance and to disguise the effusions of his patriotism and wisdom.

In our own country, in like manner, the immortal Locke, under James II., was a student persecuted and silent; the world received no benefit from the labours of his thoughts.

But the lapse of a few years and the renewal of a free form of government saw him cherished and admired; saw him give to mankind his Treatise on Government, his Reasonableness of Christianity, his Essay on Toleration, his Essay on the Human Mind, and contribute more, perhaps, than any individual who can be mentioned, to the best interests of his fellow-creatures, by contributing to remove obscurity from the mind, servility from the heart, and dogmatism from the understanding.

I need not continue this subject further. The arts that adorn, and the literature that charms the polished leisure of society, may flourish under a Louis as they did under an Augustus, but not so the higher pursuits of the human understanding. It is freedom alone which can conduct the genius of mankind to that sublimer perception of truth, to which the Almighty Master sometimes admits (as in his wisdom he sees best) the aspiring, though bounded faculties of his creatures.

# LECTURE III.

## LOUIS XV.

*The two following Lectures were originally delivered after the Lectures on the American War, and were the conclusion of the second Course. The character of the Regent is adverted to in the twenty-seventh Lecture of the same Course.*

1811.

IT is impossible for us, who live at this period, not to turn to the reign of Louis XV. with an interest that those who lived before us can never have experienced. To them it must have appeared (in this island at least,) little more than the history of private and public profligacy, of an ambitious and licentious court, of a debauched king, and of his unprincipled mistresses; a scene, that by the virtuous and the good, under our own free government, would be only surveyed for a moment, and that, with scorn and horror; of which the image would be banished from the memory, as a sort of pollution to the thoughts.

We approach it, now, with sentiments not of less repugnance, but of more curiosity, and indeed with a sort of awful anxiety. Most of us have seen, we all of us feel, (our children to many a distant age are destined to feel,) the effects of the most tremendous Revolution that Europe has ever known, since the decline of the Roman empire. Even in the reign of Louis XIV. we can now discern, as we read, the coming of this great event. What signs may we not expect to see in the long reign of his immediate successor, Louis XV.? Ignorant as men are, at the time, of the bearings and consequences not only of what they see passing around them, but often of what they are doing themselves,—it is still competent for us, after

the event is known, to trace out the causes, with which it appears to have been connected through many a distant year; and if men are ever, by any reading and meditation, to be improved in the great scale of their public relations, if they are ever to be formed, some into statesmen, others into intelligent citizens, it is not a little by retrospects like these.

After what I have now said of the interest that belongs to this period, you will be disappointed to hear from me that there is no very good account of the reign, to which I can refer you. It has not yet been written as a portion of French history. It is indeed the misery of all those who have to read French history, to find on all occasions a crowd of memoirs offered to them, with and without names, instead of any regular history, delivered to the world by any author of reputation. But the history of Louis XV. probably appeared at the time to be only the history of his mistresses and their favourites. To have given any account of their proceedings, that would have been worthy of the name of history, might not at the moment have been very prudent. Perhaps no writer adequate to the task could have been found; and every thinking man in France, *after* the reign of Louis XV., amid the confusion and pressure of the events that succeeded it, was little at leisure to begin a history of the times that were past. Duclos deserts us about the period at which we are now arrived. A few words about Cardinal Fleury, and a good account of the Seven Years' War, more particularly of the concern the French took in it, comprises the remainder of his work. We are therefore left to look out for some other guide, and I do not conceive that any can be found who would properly satisfy a French scholar; but, perhaps, English students like yourselves may be more easily satisfied. Certain reasons exist why you may be. For instance, the great subjects of the reign, to which you will turn with interest, may be considered in a general manner; and therefore you may be satisfied when a native of the country may not—the foreign politics of the reign form the first subject of inquiry.

Now, these may be found in the histories of other countries, and are of the usual stamp; the politics of craft and ambition. They therefore may be estimated in a general manner. Next, you will observe, that the domestic politics, though of the

most important nature, can also be estimated in a general manner. What were they?

1st, The disputes between the court and the parliaments; those of a financial and those of an ecclesiastical nature.

2d, The effect, in the mean time, which the writings of different eminent authors were producing upon the public mind, —the progress of the new opinions.

These, together, constitute the great subject of domestic interest during the reign of Louis. And they, too, can be best comprehended by looking at them, as it were, from a distance, and throwing them, if possible, into large masses.

The detail, therefore, on the whole, I venture to conclude, though naturally sought for by French scholars, need not be required by those of this country.

We might find, as the French readers may find, and as they require us to find, memoirs of mistresses and favourites; of Madame de Pompadour, of la Comtesse Dubarri, or even of the Duc de Choiseul, the minister. But we should perceive that it was to little purpose we had occupied our time and run the chance of debasing our minds by accompanying such personages through their disgusting scenes of court intrigue or impudent profligacy.

It is known beforehand that it is by such means that states and empires, whatever be their apparent strength, may be brought to destruction; and, when this is known, what is there else to know? The more minute transactions of these disgraceful scenes we need not dwell on.

Again, we should find it very difficult to go through all the particulars of the struggle between the crown and the parliaments, even were they any where presented to our view. But I know not that they are. There is a work by Voltaire on the subject of the parliaments, but it is little to our present purpose; stops short and huddles up the subject, where we might have wished it to proceed, fully and methodically; is rather a history of them from the earliest epoch than a history of them during this important period; and it has been considered as a partial representation, as a sacrifice to the court, made by this distinguished author, the better to dispose the court to favour, or to tolerate his own designs against Christianity.

In like manner, it would not be very easy to read the detail of the financial history of these times, though its *general* importance is easily understood. It seems enough for us to comprehend, as we can readily do, that the court would not be economical; would neither be virtuous at home nor abstain from wars abroad; that the clergy and nobility would not pay their shares to the general contribution; and that, therefore, different comptrollers-general, who were to find supplies for the general expense, had only the same impossibilities to perform, and lamentations to utter.

If then the detail of these subjects be not entirely necessary, you may be more reconciled to the *apparently* inadequate information which can be offered to you, even on such a subject as the reign of Louis XV.; a reign which I have announced, and must continue to announce, to you, as the prelude to the French Revolution.

But I spoke of general information that might be offered to you; what then is it?

Though no writer, as I have already observed, has made a regular history of this period, something has been done.

In the first place, a sort of history of Louis XV. has been written by Voltaire. The foreign politics of the reign may be collected from this work, and an idea of the principal events.

The same may be done from the short account supplied by D'Anquetil, in his late History, (of fifteen octavo volumes,) which, as a short general history of France, drawn up at the instigation of Buonaparte, I have already taken occasion to recommend.

But, finally, and on the whole, the work on which I depend, both for the internal and external concerns of this reign, is the work of Lacretelle. I have already mentioned it. It is intended by him as an introduction to his estimate (his Précis), of the French Revolution. It embraces a view of the foreign politics of the reign, and of the more domestic transactions; the disputes between the court and parliaments, and, lastly, an account of the different authors, and writings, that influenced the subsequent fortunes of the French monarchy.

Here then we have, as I conceive, what we want. Lacretelle is considered as having drawn up his account from such

books as are in the hands of men of letters in France, and from such other sources of conversation and inquiry as are to us in this country inaccessible. The author may be thought, and I believe is thought, by those *French scholars* who are conversant with these times, to have passed over the transactions of them with a sort of general, and sometimes even superficial elegance, which he interrupts not by any occasional display of very minute research. But I must here recall to your mind what I have just said. He may still present an English reader with an account that, for the reasons I have mentioned, will be sufficiently detailed and profound; nay more, one that is only the fitter for our perusal, from being of a general nature. I do not think the matter of these volumes of Lacretelle well arranged, and it will easily be perceived that due deference is paid to the political views of the present ruler of France, Buonaparte; that the author's hatred also to England is unceasing: but in a literary point of view he is always a pleasing, and often a very beautiful writer; and, with the exceptions I have mentioned, may be welcomed not only as a guide, but, on the whole, as a sufficient guide.

Since I wrote this paragraph I have observed that M^e^. de Staël speaks favourably of this author, of Lacretelle.

We will now advert a little more particularly to the reign before us. Louis XV. reigned a considerable part of the last century, from 1715 to 1774, almost as long as he lived. In 1715 began the regency of the Duke of Orleans, who died in 1723. A short period of about two years and a half comprehends the administration of the Duke of Bourbon, or rather of his mistress, la Marquise de Prie. Fleury then appears on the stage, and dies in 1743. He was therefore minister of France for seventeen years. On his death, the king (Louis XV.) undertook to be his own prime minister; an unpromising experiment for a country at any time. In this instance the result was only, that the king's mistress, M^e^. de Chateauroux, became the ruler of France, and soon after M^e^. de Pompadour, another mistress, whose reign was prolonged from 1745 to 1763. Different courtiers and prelates were seen to hold the first offices of the state during this apparent premiership of the monarch. The ladies seem to have chosen or tolerated

Cardinal Tençin, Argençon, Orsy, Mauripaux, and Amelot, who, with the Dukes Noailles and Richelieu succeeded to Fleury.

Afterwards, we have Argençon and Machault, and then come the most celebrated of the ministers or favourites of Mᵉ. de Pompadour, the Abbé de Bernis and the Duc de Choiseul. The last is the most distinguished minister after Fleury. He continued in favour from 1758, not only to 1763, when Mᵉ. de Pompadour died, but for a few years after. He was at length disgraced by la Comtesse Dubarri, who had become the king's mistress soon after the death of Mᵉ. de Pompadour, and remained so, nearly to the death of the monarch himself, in 1774.

You will learn from Lacretelle more fully the names and characters of these mistresses and ministers by whom France was thus governed during this reign. Little or no information respecting them is to be derived from Voltaire. And his account, in many respects, particularly in this, appears to me but meagre and indifferent. He probably chose to be on good terms with the principal persons of the court and administration at the time he lived. Madame de Pompadour was a kind of patroness to him.

You will then, for the present, bear in mind, the better to understand what observations I can offer, that the regent, Duke of Orleans, of whom I have already spoken, is the first ruler of the kingdom, down to the year 1723; Cardinal Fleury soon follows, and continues minister seventeen years; Madame de Pompadour succeeds for about seventeen years more; till the termination of the great war, in which Lord Chatham was our minister, in the year 1763; then comes la Comtesse Dubarri; that the Duc de Choiseul, during the last five years of Mᵉ. de Pompadour, had been minister; that he continued minister about thirteen years, till the end of the year 1770, when la Comtesse Dubarri was disgraced, and the chancellor Maupeou, and the Duc D'Aiguillon remained in power till 1774, the end of the reign.

The whole subject may be now divided into two parts; the foreign politics and the domestic.

These are (necessarily perhaps) mixed up and intermingled in Lacretelle, but I would wish you to consider the train of each of them apart, referring, no doubt, each to the other,

from time to time, but keeping each of them in the first place as much as possible apart, that you may afterwards be more aware of the folly of the whole course of the one, from observing, by a sort of side glance as you go along, the folly of the whole course of the other. For, to describe the whole, in one word, you will see in the foreign politics, for the most part, every readiness to embark in enterprises of war and expense, while, at home, in the mean time, you will observe every readiness on the part of the court to outrage the opinions of the public; i. e. every means employed to increase the embarrassment of the finances, and yet every pains taken at the same time to render it impossible to tax the people and repair the evil.

We will now treat of these two subjects, the foreign and domestic concerns, each in their order: our notices can be but slight, but I will endeavour to direct your views to the principal points.

Of the foreign politics Voltaire gives the leading facts, still more Lacretelle; but Coxe's house of Austria must be read along with them; and these, with our own histories, will be sufficient.

Of the foreign politics of the reign, you will remember that the great features are, 1st, The peace maintained between France and England during the administration of the regent and Fleury. Then the war, in which Maria Theresa, the young empress queen of the house of Austria was attacked in the year 1741, in which France took a part, and to which war Fleury most disgracefully assented. Next, a total change in the policy of France; an alliance with the house of Austria during the reign of M^e^. de Pompadour, and an interference in the seven years' war in 1756, in favour of Maria Theresa, and against the kings of Prussia and England.

These are the three great features. There are two events of a more detached nature, that may be kept apart from the rest: 1st, An interference in the affairs of Poland by Fleury, early in the year 1735, in consequence of which the Dutchies of Lorraine and Bar were ceded to France; and, 2dly, An interference in the affairs of Genoa and Corsica, by the Duc de Choiseul in the year 1768, in consequence of which Corsica was annexed to the crown of France.

These seem to me the great features of the foreign politics of the reign; but we will allude a little more distinctly to them, and then to the ministers who conducted them. Of the administration of the regent we have spoken in a former lecture. A most fortunate union of interest, between France and England then existed; fortunate even in the apprehension of the rulers of each country.

Cardinal Fleury, who succeeded the regent, was distinguished, like the sensible minister of England, (Walpole), for his love of peace.

"Peace is my dear delight, not Fleury's more."

This was again most fortunate for mankind; but it must be confessed that Fleury was quite outdone by Walpole in this inestimable quality, the love of peace. Fleury suffered (however unwillingly), but he suffered France to interfere in the succession to the crown of Poland, and placed England in such a situation that Walpole must have been perplexed in the extreme.

It is with the greatest difficulty we can accede to the cautious politics of Walpole on this occasion, while he declined assisting the house of Austria.

The Cardinal had no right to try the peaceful temper of England and her ministers so severely. The Dutchies of Lorraine and Bar were annexed to France, and became the boasts of the administration of the pacific Fleury.

Accession of territory should form no part of the wishes of any such minister; it is not on such objects that he should rest his fame. The great accusation of Fleury, is, that though fond of peace, he had not magnanimity enough to be consistent; to abstain from attempts to aggrandize France, and to depress the house of Austria; but without a magnanimity and consistency of this kind, how vain is it to pretend to the praise of a love of peace.

This affair of Poland you will see sufficiently detailed in Coxe, and it is interesting. The next transaction is the war of 1741, against Maria Theresa. Fleury seems to have had the merit of opposing those councils in the French cabinet which produced and assisted the unjustifiable attack on the young queen. But, to oppose is not always sufficient. He ought

assuredly to have retired from the cabinet, or insisted on directing it to the purposes of peace and justice. He did neither. He died in the midst of the first misfortunes of the war; misfortunes which justified, no doubt to his own mind, the pacific councils he had offered, while the invasion of England, by the Pretender, must in like manner have sanctioned to the mind of Walpole, at the time when he also was dying, the pacific policy, which *he* too had maintained through the whole of his administration.

The war which Fleury suffered his country to engage in against Maria Theresa, is the war to which Johnson alludes in his "Vanity of Human Wishes;" the poem, in which he continues, by a variety of instances, to imitate one of the finest compositions of ancient literature, till he produces one of the finest of modern; certainly of its kind, the finest:

"The bold Bavarian, in a luckless hour," &c.

On the character of Fleury, and on the character of his administration, there are good observations scattered through the work of Lacretelle. I depend upon your reading them, and do not undertake to afford you here the proper benefit of them. The character of this minister was that of wisdom, not of genius; and rather the wisdom of old age than of the understanding in its vigour. He might be distinguished among the rulers of France (he easily was) for disinterestedness and a love of economy. But he left nothing to live after him. No institution, no scheme of useful policy, no improvement of the constitution, or even laws of his country. Lorraine alone spoke his merits; an objectionable testimony, as his real merits were of a peaceful and a different kind.

His views, however, his intentions, his wishes, if these were in the minister of a great country sufficient, were of the proper nature; and, as far as the foreign politics of France were concerned, would not have tended, as did those of his successors, to accelerate the Revolution we have seen.

Descending then, thirdly, from the regent and Fleury, who died in 1743, we have to observe, that his death, during the war, produced no favourable effect on the councils of France; much the contrary: Louis XV. was rendered only more eager to rule, and more unfit. When the venerable governor of his

youth was no more, he became more than ever devoted to his mistress and to his pleasures. And the energies of this great kingdom were directed by different ministers and generals, who acted but little in concert with each other, and therefore the French arms were not successful, and Maria Theresa was not subdued.

In 1744, England and France, that had been only auxiliaries, became principals, inflamed (as usual) by their most unfortunate spirit of rivalship, and the Duke of Cumberland was little able to renew the triumphs of Marlborough, circumstanced as Europe then was, and opposed as he was to Marshal Saxe. The war was at length brought to a conclusion by the peace of Aix la Chapelle in 1748; and the monarch and the ministers, of *France at least*, might have been asked for what intelligible reason they had embroiled instead of pacifying Europe, and why their country and England were to be seen as principals contending in every quarter of the world. Even England, that began with a war against Spain in Sir Robert Walpole's administration, made a peace that had no reference to the original grounds of her indignation and fury. In making, however, the peace of Aix la Chapelle, France seems to have deserved, for one passing interval, the applause of mankind. Her conduct was conciliatory, and her terms moderate.

Of this war and of the peace you will see an ample account in all the different histories.

We now come to the Seven Years' War.

It will no doubt surprise you, as you proceed in the history, to find France at length uniting herself to the House of Austria:—that Maria Theresa should be anxious to gain over or even neutralize France, is very intelligible; she might thus recover from the king of Prussia the province of Silesia; but that France should assist the House of Austria, her ancient rival, to depress a new power, that of Prussia, whom it was more natural for her to convert into a new ally, was surely a system of policy never to have been expected. Such however was the fact. You will see the account well given in Coxe.

This union gave occasion to the celebrated Seven Years' War; the war which Maria Theresa waged, to recover her

possessions, and, if possible, destroy Prussia. England we see (as usual) engaging with France in every quarter of the world, each power appearing as a principal, for they found a subject of dispute even in the back settlements of America. Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, all beheld their battles and their sieges; the diseases and the death that marked the presence of their arms; and even the far distant and lonely tracts of the ocean were broken in upon by the sounds, and dyed by the carnage of their bloody contentions. The same tragedies of guilt and madness that had a few years before been brought to a conclusion, and even greater than these, were again renewed. The continent in the mean time, which these arbiters of the world, France and England, might have attempted (and successfully) to rescue from its fate, was abandoned to slaughter and devastation, while the king of Prussia, defended by all the qualities of an unconquerable hero, what he had acquired by all the arts of an unprincipled politician.

These are melancholy scenes for you to witness; you will draw, I hope, the proper lessons from them. I have already taken every opportunity to recommend them to your thoughts. You will best understand the part that France took in the Seven Years' War, and the mistakes which were committed, by consulting Duclos. By the extraordinary exertions of England, and talents of the great war minister, Mr. Pitt, France was obliged to sue for peace, and under the councils of Lord Bute, soon after the accession of his present majesty, it was granted to her in the year 1763.

Of these enterprises of ambition and impolitic wars, I must content myself with this general notice. The great characteristics of these foreign politics of France were a spirit of rivalship to England, and an ambition to be the leading power on the continent. But the observation that I think ought to be made is not only the general injustice of these projects of France, and therefore their general impolicy, but the peculiar impolicy, the peculiar infatuation of the monarch and ministers of this great country during the whole of the last half century, who could all this time entirely turn away their eyes from all that was passing more near them in their own country, and never condescend to consider how far their schemes

of aggrandizement and hostility abroad ought to be checked and controlled by the state of the public opinion and public debt at home. It is an awful lesson to see the court, the ministers, the nobility of a great empire like this, all proceeding upon the established principles and prejudices of their respective situations, never for a moment casting a philosophic view on their real situation, and thus hurried along like the savage in his canoe, who sleeps upon the stream till the stream has become a torrent, and he is precipitated to his destruction.

Finally, I must add that the ill success of these wars, and some defeats that the French arms experienced, put the people of France (fond as they were, and have always been, of military glory) quite out of humour with their government, and in this way somewhat contributed, as it has been always understood, to produce the revolution.

So much for the first part of our general subject—the foreign politics of France.

We now proceed to the consideration of the domestic concerns of France. These, as I have already observed, have now an interest which formerly they could not have been thought to deserve, for while you are considering these domestic concerns, you must bear in mind the revolution you have lately witnessed, even more than while considering the foreign concerns to which we have just alluded. The foreign wars, it is true, contributed to the difficulties of the state, and placed the public debt more and more out of the reach of all management, by the financiers of France; but the domestic events in the mean time contributed still more to the late revolution, and therefore are not only deserving your observation as parts of general history, but more particularly as parts of the history of that great event.

In these domestic transactions of the reign of Louis XV. the two principal points to which you are to look are the disputes of the crown with the parliaments, and the progress of the new opinions. It was by these means that at length such an alteration took place in the public sentiment, that the monarchy itself became unpopular, and the physical strength of the community was at length turned against this monarchy and its upholders, in the reign of Louis XVI.

You have already adverted to the foreign politics of France, and are aware of their effects on the public debt; you are now then to observe the history of the domestic concerns, and to consider how the disputes between the crown and the parliaments operated to alienate those constitutional bodies from the court; how the opinions and feelings of the people were continually outraged; while you are next to observe, that during all this period the most distinguished writers were sometimes enlightening, sometimes misleading, but at all events were continually agitating the public mind on subjects of religion and government.

Here, then, we have in a general point of view presented to us the great causes of the revolution.

1st, The wars, the public debts, and distresses of the state; 2d, The crown and the court rendered unpopular by the disputes with the parliaments; and, 3dly, in the mean time writers of every description turning the attention of the public to the concerns of religion and government, and that in a manner totally hostile to her existing establishments.

The result of the whole was, the loss of all public opinion, the destruction of all the proper supports of government, and the consequence, an *unrestrained* revolution—a revolution of the most tremendous nature.

To begin, then, this subject of the domestic concerns of France. It may be distinguished, as I have mentioned, into two great divisions—the disputes of the crown with the parliaments, and the progress of the new opinions.

First, then, with respect to these disputes with the parliaments, and the resistance made by these bodies to the crown.

One might at first suppose that this resistance would have been always of a civil nature, respecting the finances, for instance, but not so; the resistance not only had a reference to the finances, but for a long time to points of a religious nature.

And in this manner is an interest given to many discussions and transactions which could otherwise have no great attraction, for many of the readers of history.

I shall now proceed to allude, in the first place, to the

history of these religious disputes, afterwards to those of a financial nature.

You will recollect, while I am alluding to them, that the continual effect of them was to alienate the minds of the public from the court, and even from the monarch himself, and thus to prepare the way for the revolution.

These religious disputes then turned chiefly on the nature and operation of grace, and the freedom of the human will. The Jesuits and the Jansenists were the combatants on the different sides. The court sided with the former—the Jesuits; the parliaments with the latter—the Jansenists.

These topics of dispute (the nature and operation of grace and the freedom of the human will) are represented by many as of a frivolous nature; but none ever less deserved the name. The points debated are among the most important questions, the most magnificent problems, that can be proposed to the human understanding.

The fact, however, is, that it does not appear that the great Creator of the human mind ever intended that such problems should be solved by any faculties which he has bestowed. And the mistake of mankind is, not *that* of originally endeavouring to comprehend them, and of being anxious about them, but that of peremptorily deciding upon them, as if they were subjects within our reach; not only deciding, but even converting them into doctrines which we call upon others to believe; which we even convert into marks, by which we distinguish communities and sects, and by which we actually proceed to determine their favourable or unfavourable acceptance with the Almighty. It is not that these topics are frivolous, but that they lead to discussions which become so. When men affect to instruct each other upon questions which they are not in reality permitted to understand: when they endeavour to reply to their opponents by distinctions without a difference; when they produce explanations that only offer one term instead of another; which speak to the ear, not the mind, and when in the result they surround themselves by a labyrinth, where it is impossible to find either a resting place or an exit. Controversies of this nature marked (you may remember) the first progress of the reformation.

They were presented to you in the History of the Low Countries; Arminius and Gomar were (you may remember) the great leaders on the different sides. As you read the French history you may recollect them in the reign of Louis XIV.

This monarch was in truth a mere bigot, for such must every man be called who insists upon points of doctrine to a degree neither warranted by their importance nor the nature of their evidence, and insists upon them in a manner unfavourable to the interests of society at any time, still more so to the particular interests of the community at the period in which he lives.

A good account is given of our present subject by Belsham, in his eleventh book of the History of Great Britain; it is as concise as possible: a more lively and detailed account by Voltaire, in his chapter on Jansenism, in his Age of Louis XIV. Lacretelle must be read as giving the particulars in a less desultory and epigrammatic, and therefore more reasonable and intelligible manner than Voltaire, who has generally on these occasions the unpardonable fault of Gibbon—that of so telling his story that it cannot possibly be understood, unless the facts have been learned elsewhere.

From Voltaire, however, it may be collected that a doctor of Louvaine, named Baius, so early as 1552 had published on the subject of predestination and free-will, that his doctrines were resisted by the pope, and that the Spanish Jesuit, Molina, having also thought that he had made some discoveries on these points, set about explaining them to the world. His opinions to a certain degree prevailed, and they gave rise to the sect of the Molinists, who favoured the doctrines of free-will.

But some time after the opposite tenets of Baius—the necessarian tenets—were revived by Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres; and his writings were so successful that they were followed by the appearance of a sect, called after their founder, Jansenists.

The Jesuits and the court espoused the former system, that of free-will; the parliaments, and particularly the parliament of Paris, the latter, that of necessity. These general terms will give you a sufficient idea of the nature of their systems. "Superstition (says Hume) is an enemy to civil liberty, enthu-

siasm a friend to it. The Molinists (says Hume), while conducted by the Jesuits, are great friends to superstition, rigid observers of external forms and ceremonies, and devoted to the authority of the priests and to tradition. The Jansenists are enthusiasts, and zealous promoters of the passionate devotion, and of the inward life, little influenced by authority, and in a word but half catholics. The Jesuits are the tyrants of the people, and the slaves of the court, and the Jansenists preserve alive the small sparks of the love of liberty which are to be found in the French nation." This was written by Hume about 1742.

You will now comprehend the manner in which religious disputes gave occasion to a constant series of hostilities between the court and parliaments from the time of Louis XIV. inclusive. The details of this struggle I cannot enter into, but you may read a sufficient account of them in Voltaire and Lacretelle; and you ought to read them; first, because you will thus read the beginning, in some respects, of the late revolution in France; and, 2dly, because the history of such contentions may teach you forbearance and magnanimity, and a little good sense in your own conduct on all similar occasions; occasions which can never be wanting.

I cannot, I say, enter into the details of this struggle, but I will now mention to you the steps through which the parties proceeded in the course of it. You may observe them while I read them, and draw conclusions, without any comment of mine.

1st. Orders came from the archbishop and the clergy (the Jesuit side) to refuse the sacraments.

2nd. Censures and prosecutions from the parliament (the Jansenist side) against those who obeyed such orders.

3rd. A mandate from the court to stay all such prosecutions of the parliament.

4th. Remonstrances from the parliament.

5th. The royal commands renewed.

6th. Fresh remonstrances from the parliament.

7th. References from the king to his former commands.

8th. Suspension of all business on the part of the parliaments (which you will remember were judicial bodies.)

9th. Orders from the crown to revoke these resolutions of suspension.

10th. The parliament attempts to attach the revenue of the archbishop.

11th. At length lettres de cachet are issued; all the members of two of the courts of parliament are exiled; four others are sent to the state prisons; letters patent are issued, and an attempt is made to form new courts of justice instead of the parliaments.

But these letters patent were not valid till they were judicially enregistered. The inferior courts refused therefore to register them.

The nation was at length inflamed; the provincial parliaments remonstrated and justified the parliament of Paris; the clergy who refused the sacraments were every where prosecuted; and what then could the court now do? And what had the archbishop and the clergy next to advise? They had evidently no measure left. Conceive in what a situation this great kingdom was now placed; on the one hand the legal business of the country, and on the other the most solemn rites of the religion of the country, had ceased; social existence seemed to stop and be suspended. The parliament was therefore recalled, and the archbishop exiled. Such is the specimen I have to offer of these contests.

But how was the breach thus produced between the king and his parliaments to be ever properly healed? How was the folly of the court, and indeed of the clergy, to be ever repaired? What folly could be greater than for the court to take a part in religious disputes like these between the Jesuits and the Jansenists? What more unskilful than to give the parliaments an opportunity of resisting the crown in points where men are least of all disposed to be obedient—on subjects of religion; where resistance to authority assumes the highest tone and character that can belong to it; and men seem driven at once to the alternative of choosing whether they shall obey God or man.

The original controversy came at length to be forgotten; the cause of the parliaments was supposed to be the cause of the nation; the secret of the constitution, as must have been known both to the court and to the clergy, lay in the resistance which the parliaments could or could not legally make to the commands of the monarch; and the seeds were

thus sown of that revolution which at last broke out to the destruction of the court, the clergy, and all the established orders together.

And now with respect to the financial disputes.

It was in the course of the religious disputes on the subject of Jansenism that appeared the celebrated Provincial Letters of Pascal.

"The comedies of Molière," says Voltaire, "have not more wit than the former part of these letters, nor the writings of Bossuet more sublimity than the latter."

The Jesuits seem never to have recovered from the effects produced by these celebrated compositions.

The intolerant part which the Jesuists took in these political and religious disputes raised them up enemies in the parliament and nation, who were not to be appeased. The whole order was suppressed in the middle of the last century.

You will see very interesting particulars in the relation which Lacretelle gives to explain this very extraordinary event. Various circumstances concurred in producing it; but the accusations of their enemies formed a splendid eulogium on their talents, if not their virtues; and their order must always be mentioned, whenever the history of the human mind is to be given, the nature of its faculties to be illustrated, or the progress of its improvement explained.

So much for the religious contests between the parliaments and the court.

In my next lecture I must proceed to the *financial* disputes between the court and the parliament, and I must advert also to the progress of the new opinions, as concurring with the religious and financial disputes to make the court unpopular, and at length to produce the revolution.

But before I conclude my present lecture, I must allude to a subject which I have already mentioned to you as belonging to this reign of Louis XV.—the conquest of Corsica; a sort of insulated event, but one which may be reckoned up among the foreign transactions of the kingdom, and which I might have mentioned at the close of them; but as it must have always been introduced as a sort of digression from the main subject, whenever I had noticed it, I thought it less likely to interrupt the train of your thoughts, if I presented it to you

now, while concluding this present lecture, and before I begin the lecture of to-morrow.

It was under the administration of the Duc de Choiseul, in the year 1768, that this conquest of Corsica was accomplished. The Genoese had long exercised a sort of sovereignty over the island, but were unable properly to secure its obedience. France had been applied to, and at last the Genoese surrendered all their rights to the crown of France, and armies were sent by the Duc de Choiseul no longer to assist the Genoese, but to bring the country under subjection to Louis XV.

Voltaire gives a regular account of the fortunes of this island from the earliest times, and of the whole transaction; but as you can easily turn to his work hereafter, and even now can anticipate what he would say on the subject of the conquest itself, it may be at present more interesting to you to allude to the terms lately made use of by Lacretelle, in giving the history of this conquest.

Lacretelle is an historian, you will remember, writing under the government of Buonaparte; not a word, therefore, of the natural rights of mankind, the laws of nations, or the infamy of this transaction on the part of the French nation.

"A conquest," says Lacretelle, "more important than this of Avignon, and which the Duc de Choiseul had the good fortune to achieve, without disturbing the general peace, attested the dexterity of this minister—the conquest of Corsica. After giving a history of the island, as Voltaire had done, the Duc de Choiseul (says he) received but coldly the Genoese, who came to offer him considerable sums for our soldiers, to be employed in the reduction of Corsica. But he soon after began to offer to the Genoese, in his turn, sums far more considerable, for the cession to France of a possession much too burdensome and uncertain for a republic like theirs; the negotiation was conducted with a secrecy that prevented all jealousy in the English; the king of France announced himself to the Corsicans as a mediator, who was disposed to have their independence acknowledged. Their chief Paoli gave credit to these assurances. In the month of May, 1768, Europe learned with surprise that the Genoese had by treaty ceded Corsica to France; in truth, this cession was not announced

as final and irrevocable; the Genoese reserved the right of resuming their sovereignty when they could reimburse the French their expenses. This illusory clause was only intended, says Lacretelle, to soften the resentment of the English; the king of France soon showed the fallacy of the whole, by assuming the title of king of Corsica.

The Corsicans displayed all the indignation of a people abused by vain promises. The English animated their resistance by promises of their own, equally fallacious. Lacretelle then proceeds to state shortly, that the war was for some time, on the part of the French, not successful; that the French general represented the enterprise to be as foolish as it was expensive; that the king hesitated, but that the minister insisted on the importance of the island, &c., and that his decision prevailed.

"No movement," the historian goes on to say, "was observed in the ports of England, and it was impossible not to form a high idea of the talents of a minister who had thus deceived or intimidated a government so jealous and so haughty; a new general was sent; the Corsicans, outraged by the inaction of the English, lost all courage; Paoli, who had made them expect their assistance, partook of the general despair. After being chased from post to post, he was fortunate enough to reach a sea-port and embark for England; Corsica was reduced, and the Duc de Choiseul had the glory of having given a new province to his master, of having made a conquest merely by means of his political address, and of having thrown down the gauntlet to the English, even when intoxicated with all their triumphs, which they did not think proper to take up. "Why," says Lacretelle, "was England so timid on this occasion? On account of the troubles in her American colonies."

What says our own historian? "The transfer of Corsica to France," says Adolphus, "was an early topic of debate, but produced no interesting remark or useful information; a motion for the correspondence between the British and French ministry, and for instructions and other papers, introduced a discussion on the value of the acquisition. The opposition maintained that every accession of power to France was dangerous to this country; and as great attention had been

paid for so many years to the maintenance of a proper equilibrium among the powers of Europe, the invasion of that island ought to have been considered as a violent breach of treaty, and subversive of that equilibrium. It was replied, that Corsica was a place of no importance, destitute of a good harbour, and an acquisition that would prove rather an evil than a benefit to France; but at all events, loaded as we already were with debt, folly and madness alone could impel us to engage in a war for so small an object."

To the ministers of England, and apparently to this historian of England, there was nothing then at issue but the mere possession of a barren island in the Mediterranean. Ministers of the same temperament had in their proclamation at the peace forbidden the king's subjects to afford assistance to the Corsicans, and had even presumed to call them rebels. "I expected not this from England," said their gallant chieftain. From England he could not have received such an outrage; the public sentiment was in his favour, and sufficiently clear, and it will be an ill omen for England when on such an occasion it is not so:

> "For he who values liberty, confines
> His zeal for her predominance within
> No narrow bounds, her cause engages him
> Wherever pleaded—'tis the cause of man."

So was it on this occasion. It was the cause of man, and not of the weeds on the sea-shore, or the heath upon the mountains of Corsica, but that of the security of every unoffending community, however small; the security and the shelter that are thrown around every nation by the common pact and guarantee of the republic of nations, while it is content with its own possessions, and neither insults nor invades those of others, and this too in the very view and vicinity of nations more powerful and wealthy, who, like the affluent and the great on the smaller scale of the social and civil connexions of men, are to respect the innocence, and to beat off the spoiler from the cottage of their neighbour, not themselves to become the murderers and the robbers, the Ahabs of sacred writ, who annex to their own wide extent of possessions, and their own assemblage of enjoyments, the humble pittance which the

villager has placed upon his board, and the little spot that he has loved, as the inheritance of his fathers.

The author of the Annual Register, who gives a very good account of these transactions, very properly observes, "that it was evident, from the difficulties which the French encountered and the losses they sustained, without any other opposition, than the single virtue of the natives, that this attempt might have been easily rendered abortive, and that nothing but the most unaccountable supineness in states, that were not only interested in the preservation of this island, but much more in preventing any new accession of power or dominion to France, could have given it even a probability of success."—Ann. Reg. 1769, p. 46.

The efforts of these heroic islanders to resist the power of France, even as related by Voltaire, were, as you will find, of the most extraordinary nature. The carnage was dreadful.

These are the events in history that it is so painful to observe. The description of the Romans must not be confined to those conquerors of the world; it is but too true of every great people, "Si locuples hostis est, avari, si pauper, ambitiosi sunt." The new world is no sooner discovered, the riches of the west and of the east are no sooner exposed to view, than out rush from every port and haven, the iron men of Europe, to rifle and to massacre the unhappy possessors of these fatal treasures. We have the conquest of Mexico and the conquest of Peru, the Dutch East India Company, and the French East India Company, and the honourable Company (honourable did I say?) of British merchants trading to the East Indies. We have one quarter of the world given away by the Pope, and we have another quarter purchased from the Mogul; and because the Corsicans it seems had neither the mines of the west nor the gems and spices of the East, these islanders were to be envied, the first rude gifts that nature has to bestow, the trees of their mountains, and the sinews of their frames; navies, it seems, might be drawn froom their woods, and soldiers from their population; they breathed the free air of their wild country, without asking the leave of France; they loved and hated, and hoped, and feared without orders from Versailles.

How little could the Duc de Choiseul suspect, while he was

sending his countrymen, the troops of his king, to perish, battalion after battalion; while he was calling upon the gallant officers of France to perpetrate his foul butcheries of an unoffending people, hemming in the brave with his bayonets, and corrupting the irresolute with his gold; waging a sacrilegious war against human virtue under every form;—how little could this triumphant minister of the court of Louis suspect, that from out of the freemen he was thus bribing, pursuing, and murdering, that from out of those very men who were thus to be converted into subjects of the French monarchy, should arise in the next generation—how little could the Duc de Choiseul suspect it—the man, the very Buonaparte, who was to usurp the throne of his master, and from the very palaces of the Bourbons, where he was himself sitting, issue orders to execute like traitors and outcasts, the princes of their race; trample under his feet "the pride, the pomp and the circumstance" not only of that House of Bourbon, but even of that House of Austria, which the Duc de Choiseul had so cherished and united to the throne of France; realize more of empire than the proudest of the Bourbons had ever fancied in their most splendid visions; and ministers like himself, and monarchs like his master, the helpless or unworthy potentates of the continent, "catch in his fury and make nothing of."

Yet these things have we seen; such is the eventful era in which we live, and such the mysterious dispensations of that Providence, which not unfrequently seems to mock the councils of the worldly wise, and which suffers no course of conduct ultimately to deserve the character of real wisdom or sane ambition, but that conduct on which nations, as well as individuals, had best confide; that conduct which is independent of all changes of events, by being founded on the eternal rules of humanity and justice.

Several years have elapsed since what I have just delivered was first written. During this period what changes have we not seen? Buonaparte was then in the zenith of his power, the lord of the ascendant; but has any thing since happened to invalidate the force of what I then said? Is he to whom I have just alluded an example to the contrary?

I must confess that I do not so interpret the events we have witnessed.

I am conscious, indeed, that I speak of the dispensations of that awful Being, in whose sight a thousand years are but as one day; that this, our sublunary state, is rather a state of probation, than of present reward and punishment; but, when due attention has been paid to these considerations, where, I may still ask, where, during this extraordinary era, of five and twenty years, from the breaking out of the French Revolution, where are the instances in the conduct of any of the nations of Europe, or of their rulers; where are the instances of violence, of injustice, of inhumanity, that have ultimately been of benefit to their perpetrators.

Be assured that the magnanimity of uprightness, and all the elevating and all the attractive qualities of the human mind, are the best protection of nations, as well as individuals; that the path of honour is the path of true policy; and that the great Governor of the world, in public, as well as in private life, has indissolubly connected, even on this side the grave, the happiness of his creatures, with the exercise of their virtues, and the fulfilment of their duties.

# LECTURE IV.

## LOUIS XV.

MY last lecture endeavoured to call your attention to the reign of Louis XV. The task must have been easy, when I had once announced to you that this reign, long as it was, extending through almost the whole of the last century, was but a prelude to the French Revolution.

I endeavoured to state to you the great points to which you should direct your observation; the wars in which France was engaged, and why they were impolitic (to say nothing of the injustice of them) to a degree of infatuation. Afterwards, I attempted to exhibit to you the reasons why the public mind, while the national debt was thus increasing, advanced fast into a state of alienation from the monarchy and the existing establishments. This alienation took place partly in consequence of the disputes between the parliaments and the court, and partly from the progress of the new opinions. The disputes between the parliaments and the court were of a twofold nature; they were religious and they were financial. In the last lecture we alluded to the religious disputes: to-day we must first allude to those of a financial nature, and at length to the effects produced by the progress of the new opinions.

It will readily be supposed that the opposition of the parliaments to the crown was not confined to religious matters. The finances, it will easily be conceived, were a constant subject of complaint and ill-humour. The secret of the French constitution, as I must often repeat, lay in the power or right which the Parliaments had, to deny their sanction to the king's edicts, and therefore to the taxes. The power of thus legalizing the king's taxes would not have been contested with the States General; but the parliament only claimed as the

representative of the States General, in the intervals of their sittings; and the right was therefore open to dispute.

Now, whether their claim was, or was not, well-founded, still, as the right was a great constitutional question, the obvious policy of the crown was to give the parliament as few opportunities as possible of asserting it.

But this could only be done, as far as taxation was concerned, in three modes:

1st, By keeping the expenses of the crown and court as low as possible.

2dly, By abstaining from foreign wars.

Or, lastly, by persuading or obliging the clergy and nobility to pay their shares of the public burthen.

Now, it was impossible for any ministers of finance to produce any reform in the two first modes of diminishing the public expense; no system of economy, no system of peace, and avoidance of foreign wars, was possible. But neither, on the other hand, was the third mode possible; for neither the nobility nor the clergy had virtue to do what it was both their duty and ultimate interest to do, to pay their shares of the public burthen. The finances, therefore, got at length into irremediable embarrassment. The situation of a minister of finance may be easily conceived, and is not ill-described by Lacretelle. "If one of these unhappy functionaries," says he, "endeavoured to ascertain the real situation of the public revenue, he was disgraced. He was in danger if he talked of any existing evil, and ruined if he proposed any remedy. Did he speak of any reduction in the expenses, the court were furious; of any equalizing of the imposts, the parliaments, the clergy, and the nobility were in an uproar; was he exact and methodical in conducting business, the financiers ridiculed him as a man of little mind and of no genius; did he endeavour in his edicts to disguise and conceal the new impositions which he laid, the economists denounced him not only as guilty of oppression, but of the most egregious folly. To escape from difficulties like these, what resource, but to anticipate, from year to year, the coming revenue; and yet what expedient so ruinous? One really knows not, continues the historian, what were the views of the different comptrollers-general that succeeded to each other. One talks of the Moris,

the Bretagnes, and the Sechelles; and one seems to be speaking but of the same person; so like are they to each other in the expedients to which they resorted and in their compliances, the obscurity of their march, and the rapidity of their fall.

You will observe that the parliaments were, in the mean time, the chief enemies which the court had to fear; they imposed the only restraint that could be imposed on its expenses, whether of domestic profligacy or foreign war; they did so, by the remonstrances and the opposition which they regularly made to the enregistering of the taxes. This opposition had more or less existed for a long period. We have alluded in a former lecture to the subject of the taxes; and the extraordinary measures proposed by the celebrated John Law, and acceded to by the regent. To these measures the parliaments made every resistance in their power, and had at least the comfort of reflecting, amid the general distress, that they had laboured to protect the public from the evils they were suffering; still, they had thus been thrown, which is a circumstance more immediately to our present purpose, into a state of opposition to government.

This opposition was again renewed in the administration of the Duc de Bourbon in 1725, when his ministers of finance had recourse to the only expedient that could meet the profusion of the court; an impost of one-fifth on all the revenues of the kingdom, those of the privileged orders not excepted. Such was the weight of opinion in favour of the authority of the crown at *that time* in France, (though only about seventy years before the trial and execution of the late king,) that even this measure, the measure of an impost of one shilling and five pence on all the revenues of the kingdom, in opposition to the nobles, to the clergy, to the parliaments in Paris and the provinces, was actually, from the mere authority of the crown, enregistered by the parliament in Paris, and carried; though the impost was such, that it was understood that it would bear away not one-fifth, but one-fourth of the net revenue of every man of property in the kingdom; and even though the Duke of Bourbon, the minister, was not respected by the public.

The next year, indeed, on the elevation of Fleury, this im-

post which he had opposed, though perhaps somewhat faintly, was by the cardinal removed.

The receipt had been injured by the opposition that had been made. Under such a feeble government as the duke's, it had not been levied with any strictness. Fleury endeavoured to meet the financial difficulties by economy and financial expedients. He could not, however, escape the remonstrances of the parliament, who predicted loudly a national bankruptcy, and did no service by such language and conduct to the authority of the crown.

On the whole, however, Fleury must be considered as successful in his management of the finances.

But the scene was altered when he was no more; and when the economy, which he had maintained by every expedient in his power, died with him; when the reign of indifferent ministers and expensive mistresses succeeded.

I may not now be able to advert further to the profusion of the court and the history of the taxes. But the same general idea of the subject of the parties concerned, and their modes of behaviour, on all occasions, may perhaps be formed from a slight allusion to an affair which excited considerable interest at the time, and deservedly. M. de Pompadour, the mistress of Louis XV. made and unmade the treasurers at her pleasure, and of course, the treasury lay at her mercy. She at length introduced the practice of drawing bills on the treasury which had no other sanction but the mere signature of the king, no service specified. Of these, as it may be supposed, the more the king signed, the more he had to sign; one compliance leading to another; and it was easier to sign his name than to take the trouble of refusing.

A practice like this, as the historian observes, was enough to bring the best established monarchy to ruin. The comptrollers-general were in despair.

At length one of these comptrollers-general, Machault, formed a regular design, the only measure left him, to tax, if not the nobility, at least the clergy. He wanted not firmness nor address; and the parliament were less disposed to resist the edicts of the crown, when it was found that they were directed exclusively against the clergy. The clergy, however, warded the blow, in the following manner. They had got the

court leagued with them in their resistance to the parliament on the subject of Jansenism. This dispute, as I mentioned, at the end of my last lecture, came to a crisis. You may remember that it was found expedient by the court to recall the parliaments from their exile, and to persuade the clergy to wave their intolerant measures, the refusal of the sacraments, the rites of sepulture, &c. &c.

The clergy, therefore, on this occasion, made their bargain with the court; and procured in return, for their compliance, with respect to the sacraments, rites of sepulture, &c. the dismissal of Machault, the comptroller-general, who had proposed to tax them.

They left the kingdom, therefore, and the finances to their fate. No doubt they congratulated themselves not a little on thus defeating a scheme which they probably declared in the blindness of their selfishness would have been the ruin of their order and of all religion. And no doubt the same blindness of selfishness would have been visible in the conduct of the nobility if *they* also had been required, as they ought to have been, to pay their contingent to the general burthens. Such a measure they would have declared aloud was a direct attack on the privileges of their order, and tended only to destroy their constitutional importance; was an attack on the monarchy itself, proceeded only from a secret hostility to all government, &c. &c.

The clergy escaped the tax, the nobility were not even threatened. The finances, therefore, advanced further and further into embarrassment and disgrace. The subsequent events (the Revolution) are but too well known.

Such particulars as these (I can only glance at them), may serve to illustrate the general nature of the subject. The folly and profligacy of Louis and the court; the blindness and disgusting selfishness of the privileged orders; and the difficulties that the ministers of finance were under from the moment they attempted to serve their country; while in the mean time that country was evidently journeying on in an accelerated progress, to a national bankruptcy.

It is to be observed, too, that France, all this time, took her part in the affairs of Europe, and engaged in foreign wars, as if under no financial difficulties whatever.

The Seven Years' War, in which she engaged, contributed materially to these embarrassments. Neither the death of the queen, nor of Madame de Pompadour, produced any beneficial effect on the mind of the king. His excesses, after the year 1763, were but the more disgraceful; and Mᵉ. du Barré, a new mistress, succeeded Mᵉ. de Pompadour, with all the faults, and none of the merits of the former.

You will now, I conceive, be able to form a general idea of the opposition that always more or less, existed between the parliaments and the crown during this long reign of Louis XV. Opposition, partly arising on the subject of religion, partly of finance; and, on the whole, you are to bear away an impression that, all through the reign, publicly and privately, such a series of outrages was offered to public opinion, by unfeeling profusion, by intolerance, by levies of money, and abominable immoralities, as could not but be at least a preparative for the Revolution that followed.

Before, however, I entirely conclude this part of my general subject, the financial disputes, I must at least mention, and direct your attention to the very remarkable affair of the Duc D'Aiguillon. The detail of it is too long for me to do more than mention it. I have not time now to enter into it; but you must remember that it ended in the actual suppression of the parliaments. And you are to consider what must have been at every step, as you read the particulars, the irritation of the public mind, and the national indignation that must have accompanied so violent a measure as the destruction of their parliaments.

This very striking event, however, seems not to have produced such visible effects as might have been expected; and the real situation of France was not generally apprehended by those who lived at the time, either in or out of the kingdom.

"The noble efforts," says the author of the Annual Register, in 1771, "of that faithful repository of the laws, and remembrancer of the ancient rights of the people, the parliament of Paris, in the cause of liberty and mankind, have fatally terminated in its own final dissolution.

"Its fall was not more glorious from the cause in which it was engaged, than from the circumstances which attended it; several of the other parliaments having become voluntary sacrifices at its funeral pyre.

"That ancient spirit from which the Franks derive their name, though still gloriously alive in the breasts of a few, no longer exists in the bulk of the people. Long dazzled with the splendour of a magnificent and voluptuous court, with the glare of a vast military power, and with the glory of some great monarchs, they cannot now in the grave light of the shade, behold things in their natural state; nor can those who have been long used to submit without inquiry to every act of power, who have been successfully encouraged in dissipation, and been taught to trifle with the most important subjects, suddenly acquire that strength and tenor of mind which is alone capable of forming strong resolutions, and of undertaking arduous and dangerous tasks. Thus has this great revolution in the history and government of France taken place without the smallest commotion, or without the opposition that in other periods would have attended an infraction of the heritable jurisdiction of a petty vassal."

This paragraph was written in the year 1771, by no less a man than Mr. Burke, and is no doubt a fair specimen of the opinions which intelligent men formed of the situation of France at the time. In general, therefore, they seem not to have been aware of the changes that were to ensue. Had Burke, however, set himself to reason on the subject with the same philosophic spirit with which we are soon after to see him survey the situation of the North American colonies, no doubt he would have perceived that there were great principles in existence, and even in action in France, which might indeed be counteracted by circumstances, but which certainly were capable at least of producing great alterations, whether favourable or not to the monarchy and to the kingdom. Particular circumstances, the personal character of a monarch or a minister, for instance, may disturb the natural operation of such general principles, suspend them for a time, or even nullify them altogether. The tide, too, of human affairs runs with a very different rapidity at different periods; sometimes seems to pause even for long intervals, and then rushes forward with a force and a swiftness that exceed all possible anticipation. In these cases the state of quiescence has been more imaginary than real. The lesson, however, of the whole is certainly this, that men of education and influence should

be very attentive to observe all the general principles that are fitted to act upon a community, and that may be found at any particular time to exist in it, and that the fault of men, especially the rulers of mankind, is that of neglecting these general principles too much. But this fault arises not always from mere want of intelligence, it is often rather from apathy and indolence—no effect without a cause, but no cause without a tendency to produce an effect. Of this men are aware; nor do they suppose that they are to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. But it is easier to repose upon an existing system and contribute to its dangers, than by virtuous conduct to alter it in time, and prevent the calamities which it is calculated to produce. Louis XV. is himself a specimen of rulers of this ordinary description. He began with personal indolence, which soon ripened into sensuality, its natural consequence; this again into a sort of languid indifference to public affairs, and even to the situation of the monarchy itself. He amused himself with knowing all the little anecdotes and scandal in every court of Europe; but he interested not himself in the literature and the philosophy of his own country. He was aware of, and felt a sort of vague disquietude at the extraordinary movement that was going on in the public mind; but he talked only with ill-humour or disdain of the philosophers, the encyclopedists, and above all, of Voltaire. "Those people," he would sometimes say, "will destroy the monarchy;" but he seemed to console himself with the thought that after all he was not the monarch that was menaced, and in Louis, on this occasion, in his indolence, apathy, quiescence, and want of active virtue, we may no doubt see the portrait of the greater part of the privileged orders of France almost to the very moment when the States General were assembled at the beginning of the revolution.

In the Memoirs of Madame de Hausset, lady's maid to Madame de Pompadour, appears an anonymous letter that was addressed to Louis XV., and whatever might be the motives of the writer, the picture that he gives the king of the state of his affairs is accurate and striking.

"Your finances," says he, in the course of the letter, "are in the greatest disorder, and the great majority of states have perished through this cause.

"Your ministers are without genius and capacity.

"A seditious flame has sprung up in the very bosom of your parliaments; you seek to corrupt them, and the remedy is worse than the disease.

"Open war is carried on against religion.

"The Encyclopedists, under pretence of enlightening mankind, are sapping the foundations of religion.

"All the different kinds of liberty are connected; the philosophers and the protestants tend towards republicanism as well as the Jansenists; the philosophers strike at the root, the others lop the branches, and their efforts, without being concerted, will one day lay the tree low.

"Add to these the Economists, whose object is political liberty, as that of others is liberty of worship, and the government may find itself in twenty or thirty years undermined in every direction, and will then fall with a crash.

"Lose no time in restoring order to the state of the finances. Embarrassments necessitate fresh taxes, which grind the people, and induce them towards revolt.

"A time will come, sire, when the people shall be enlightened; and that time is probably approaching."

This letter, it is said, produced a strong impression on the king, M^e^. de Pompadour, and the Duc de Choiseul.

Again—"the regent," said the king one day (p. 37), "was very wrong in restoring to the parliaments the right of remonstrating. They will end in ruining the state." "Oh, sire," said one of his courtiers, "it is too strong to be shaken by a set of petty justices."

"They are an assembly of republicans," replied the king; "however, here is enough of the subject; things will last as they are, as long as I shall."

I proceed now to the second point to be considered in the domestic concerns of the reign of Louis XV.—the progress of the new opinions. Not meaning to give any regular history of the French revolution, still less to enter into the different writings that belong to this part of the general subject, my observations must be very short, and I am happy to have it in my power to refer you to the author I have already mentioned, Lacretelle, to whose authority, on this very delicate subject of the influence of the new opinions, I do not at

present see that any objection can well be made. He has already written a Précis of the French revolution, highly and generally esteemed. He is represented to me as attached in reality to the principles of free government, and yet he writes under the protection of the government of Buonaparte. It could not have been the wish of that or of any government that the principles which produced irreligion and anarchy should be favoured—the doctrines of levellers or republicans—lest they should prove fatal to itself: nor again, that the old government should be favoured—its evils, the vices and the faults of its court and of its nobles—lest the new order of things which had been established on their overthrow, should appear less necessary or less desirable. There seems, therefore, on the whole, from the character and situation of the writer, a sufficient chance for impartiality. Lacretelle is a man of letters, and has more opportunities of information, and more incitements to inform himself on these particular points, than those not resident in France can possibly have; and it will therefore be sufficient for me just to mention to you for the present a few of his opinions, and leave you to consider more regularly what he has to offer when you come to read his work, and when you can perhaps compare it with what you may be able to learn from other sources of inquiry.

He conceives, then, that the writers to whom, among other causes, the events of the French revolution are attributed, acted not in that concert, which has been supposed, either against the throne or the altar, or at least but for a very short interval; that to the year 1748 (the peace of Aix la Chapelle) the philosophers, as they are called, formed no distinct party; that Voltaire had but feeble auxiliaries; that Montesquieu soared too high; that changes, however, had taken place in manners, and gave a presage of similar changes in opinions; that even in the reign of Louis XIV. two different succeeding ages of literature may be observed; during the best part of his reign, literature, he thinks, like every thing else, tended only to the support of order and authority; that men were libertines rather than unbelievers, but that to this golden age of Louis XIV. succeeded even in the *same* reign a second age, beginning about 1685, marked in the government of the country by the repeal of the edict of Nantz, and by intole-

rance, and in the history of literature distinguished by the appearance of the Télémaque of Fénélon.

That the French had begun to make remarks upon their government, and that the Télémaque furnished them with their lessons; that religion then met its first adversary in Bayle; that manners had in the mean time declined, and were not to be favourably influenced by the austerities of Louis XIV.; that they were however unfavourably influenced by the more distinguished writers of the time.

During the regency of the Duke of Orleans, Lacretelle conceives that literature sacrificed less than the arts did, to the corruptions and vices of the day; but he observes, that men of letters then first began to be animated with the ambition of succeeding in society; men of fashion and rank became their friends rather than their patrons; that it was thus by their conversation rather than by their writings, that they were elevated into a sort of invisible legislators; that in this situation of things at length shone forth Voltaire and Montesquieu.

Voltaire must be considered as the great literary character in France during the last century; his Œdipus appeared so early as 1716; he died not till 1778.

As far as relates to our present subject, he must be looked upon as the great adversary not only of the particular Roman Catholic religion of his country, but of Christianity itself under every form and description. Fanaticism was at first, and indeed always, the avowed object of his attack; but as he advanced in years the destruction of Christianity itself seems to have been the great passion of his life.

Lacretelle, with great propriety, is very particular in his account of Voltaire; his character, the great events of his life, and his writings. To him I must refer you.

Montesquieu must be considered as addressing himself to the statesmen of the world, and as not suffering to expire in France the flame which had first been raised into existence by the Télémaque of Fénélon. He and Voltaire both passed over into England, and the one afterwards exhibited to his countrymen the picture of the philosophy of England, and the other that of the grandeur of the Romans. Montesquieu was long applauded rather than comprehended; but both he

and Voltaire were eminently successful, and on the whole, freedom of thought was thus introduced into France, and soon after exercised in a very great degree.[x]

In this manner we arrive at the close of the administration of Fleury; and Lacretelle observes, that the contest which always exists between the favourers of new opinions and the followers of old, in literature as well as politics, began now to turn in favour of the former, the favourers of new opinions.

As soon as the peace of Aix la Chapelle was concluded (in 1748), a great fermentation existed. The monarch was devoted to pleasure, and relaxed the reins of government, and the parliaments and clergy were each candidates for the authority he had thus abandoned.

At this interval appeared the second great work of Montesquieu, L'Esprit des Loix.

Voltaire in the mean time found favour at court; M^e^. de Pompadour patronised him, though not so Louis XV., who saw in him, as he thought and declared, a man who would endeavour to hurry along in the current of public opinion even the monarchy itself.

The influence of the work of Montesquieu is evidently considered by Lacretelle as very great. The success was for a long time undecided. But at length, says he, the most frivolous would have thought that they were betraying their incapacity, by only *moderately* admiring his Spirit of Laws. But after Montesquieu, who died in 1755, appeared Buffon, Diderot, D'Alembert, Duclos, Condillac, Helvetius, and above all, Rousseau. To Rousseau the attention of Lacretelle is more particularly directed; a sort of life is given of him, his writings and their influence carefully noted. I must refer you to his account of Rousseau, as I have already done to his account of Voltaire.[y]

It is with some difficulty that I can restrain myself from endeavouring to turn to your advantage (here and immediately) the description which Lacretelle has given of both these distinguished men, but I am always as careful of your time, particularly while in this place, as I know well how to be, and must depend on your reading for yourselves his narratives and observations.

Soon after the peace of 1748 (about the years 1751 and

and 1752), Paris became the great resort for men of letters. Diderot is represented as the real centre round which they revolved, and to him is applied by Lacretelle the description of Catiline by Sallust—"Vastus animus immoderata, incredibilia, nimis alta semper cupiebat."

Diderot is considered as being not only, like Voltaire, a furious enemy to Christianity, but as at length becoming an atheist, lest he should be outstripped in the race of incredulousness.

Lastly, he is said to have formed the project of the French Encyclopédie as a means of diffusing what he called light to all Europe, as well as France, and of destroying all ancient prejudices, that is, all modes of belief.

D'Alembert was his associate, the great friend of Voltaire, and apparently the idol of all men of literature and science, not only for the extent and depth of his genius, but his amiable and estimable qualities. Two volumes of the work appeared in 1751.

This date will strike us, on a little reflection, as a very early one—the time of George II., only five years after the crown of this country was fought for in this very island, in the rebellion of 1745.

The clergy, the Jesuits, the government, were at first alarmed. The work early in the next year was suppressed, as contrary to religion and to the state; the principal authors menaced.

But Madame de Pompadour was a lady who on this occasion personated the Goddess of Fortune, and her caprices or views of her own interest happening to shift about into a contrary direction, the suppression was taken off, and the storm, to which the work had been exposed, passed over.

Voltaire continued his attacks on Christianity under every form, but is considered by Lacretelle as stopping at this point, and as opposing, not favouring, the new opinions on other subjects. He sharply condemned those new opinions which menaced the stability of the state, and very indignantly those which affected the principles of good taste. Voltaire was the philosopher of the court, not of the nation. "Why do you not stop where Voltaire does," was the language held by the Duc de Choiseul and the people of fashion to the philosophers

of the day. "Him we can comprehend; amid all his sallies *he* respects authority, but *you*—you are mysterious and obscure, and discuss and lay down your doctrines in a pedantic, suspicious, and disagreeable manner. We abandon to you religion and the clergy. Is not this sufficient? many, too, of our prejudices; why cannot you have some regard for those at least that are useful?"

But we must now observe, that we are arrived at a second stage in our present subject—the minds of men of talents in France ten years *after* the publication of the Encyclopédie had begun, it seems, to require a master more powerful than could be found in Voltaire, or in any disciple of his school.

The great rival genius of the century had appeared—the eloquent Rousseau; and in the effusions of his ardent and irritated mind, a new world had been displayed, to which the world, then existing, constituted on the ancient system, seemed "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable."

It was Rousseau, though abominated by Voltaire, and though disliked by the philosophers, who could neither hold him in his transports, nor direct him in his march—it was Rousseau that became the philosopher of the young, the young of both sexes, of that rising generation destined so materially to influence the fortunes of the ancient government of France, and the happiness of mankind.

His prize declamation against the arts and sciences; his discourse on the Inequality of Conditions—(it was Diderot that had whispered to him the nature and the force of his talents)—the new Eloise, the Emile, the Social Contract, the Letters from the Mountains—these were the writings that so awakened the enthusiasm of the readers of France soon after the middle of the last century; these were the writings, that as their influence descended through the different ranks of society, from year to year, bewildered the speculations of the inexperienced, amid the evils inseparable from our condition, and the visions of unattainable perfection.

Such effects it may be thought took place very naturally among the readers of France, during the close of the last century, situated as France then was. But this is not sufficiently to apprehend the powers of Rousseau. Even now, and in England, let every man, let every young man more parti-

cularly, be careful how he approaches these productions with too great a confidence in himself, and too regardless of the fate of others. To this hour, even, after all the calamitous events of the French revolution, at a distance from all the contagion then experienced—the contagion of a thousand fermenting minds, importunate hopes and benevolent aspirations—in the absence of every thing that can mislead and inflame, that can call away the understanding from its perceptions of truth, or the sentiments from their impressions of duty—in the very calm and solitude of domestic happiness or political tranquillity, even *thus* happily situated, let no man presume to suppose himself safe, when exposed to the eloquence of Rousseau, safe when placed within the circle of that mighty magician. His is the spell that can teach the heart to wander till it knows not, and cares not, whither it is going, or how fatally it is lost; his is the wand under whose influence, as it waves around, crimes the deepest change their colour, absurdities the most lowly elevate their aspect and their form; suicide, seduction, the equality of civilized man, the happiness of savage existence.—Extraordinary being! Intelligence and insanity mingling their streams into one wild current of strange and uncertain brightness! The moralist and the logician; the estimator of man and of society through every stage of their existence; the believing sceptic; the master of the heart; the agitator of the understanding; attracting, and yet repelling; fascinating, and yet wearying our attention; disgustful, yet of a sensibility too tender and unhappy not to be pitied and almost beloved; ridiculous, yet of a genius and a wisdom too sublime not to be respected, and almost revered!

There are other writers besides those already mentioned that are enumerated by Lacretelle—Helvetius, for instance, and the materialists. Helvetius and his school must also be considered as principal figures in the general picture which we are now sketching. From the year 1758 to 1770, Lacretelle observes, that the French literature was disgraced by a great number of publications, where atheism was openly professed; the authors seem to have been anonymous. The true philosophers, Turgot, Malesherbes, and their associates, lamented over these perversions of the human intellect; and Voltaire protested against the principles of many of those who

ranged themselves under his standard. Marmontel, La Harpe, and other men of letters did the same. The works against Revelation, continues Lacretelle, were still more numerous: some with all the grossness, he says, which generally marks them; others recommended by graces of style, like those of Voltaire; others, again, by logical subtilties, like those of Rousseau.

The stage was, it seems, not overlooked, as affording an opportunity to wage war against opinions that were old. Lastly, men of talents made it a practice to entertain society by their sallies against the doctrines of religion, till at length the conversation which at the beginning of the century disgraced the private parties of the regent, descended, as the century advanced, through the intermediate ranks, down even to the night cellars of the metropolis.

Such are the remarks I have to offer respecting the new opinions of France, borrowing my facts from Lacretelle. And in this manner we are conducted to the end of the reign of Louis XV. But I have selected these facts, as those more immediately important, from a large mass stated by Lacretelle in about three hundred pages of his work, in his ninth and twelfth books. In reading these books, I would recommend it to the reader to do what Lacretelle has not done: set apart as much as possible those writings which may be supposed to have affected the opinions of the public on subjects of *morality, religion,* and *government,* and distinguish them carefully from those that belong to *general literature only,* or even to *science.* It is the former that are evidently *alone* deserving your attention, while you are endeavouring to form a philosophic estimate of the rise of the French revolution; and the mind is drawn aside from its object, when others are mentioned; any others but those which affected morality, religion, and government. I have found some difficulty in making the selection and separation which I am proposing to your imitation, and I may not have entirely succeeded. I conceive, however, that the important features are those I have enumerated: Voltaire, Montesquieu, L'Encyclopédie, Rousseau, Helvetius, and the materialists; finally, the low publications of the atheistical school: these are the *authors* and the *writings.*

The *circumstances* more particularly are, the introduction of

allusions and invectives against old opinions and prejudices on the stage; the circulation of remarks and witticisms of an irreligious nature in the conversations of society; and, finally, the alteration that gradually took place in the manners and views both of society and men of letters themselves, in consequence of which the authors of books were no longer solitary students, insulated and unseen, but men of the world, ambitious to shine in society; forming its taste, influencing its opinions, and producing by visible and rapid agency, that alteration in the views, sentiments, and habits of the community, which had always *before* appeared the slow and silent effect of time alone.

It may be added, that the natural progress of the prosperity of France, in despite of its wars, must have extended very widely the circle of men of intelligence and independence; that circle which comprehends within it what in every country may be called (as far as politics are concerned) the effective public.

Now, reflect for a moment on the few particulars that have been mentioned.

The writings of Voltaire—how were these to be resisted by the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic communion? What materials were not in his works supplied for the ridicule of what was thought to be Christianity, in a nation of which gaiety has been always the passion, and thoughtlessness the reproach?

Who can refute, as it has been well said, a sneer or a witticism? But what Frenchman, it may be added, would have ever tried?

Again, the writings of Montesquieu—how were the great views of this estimator of ages and nations, how were they to be shut out from the minds of men of intelligence in France?—By the transactions of their own times, and the scenes of their own history?—the wars and mistresses of their monarchs?—the lettres de cachet of their ministers?—their exiled and ruined parliaments?—the shades and spectres of their constitution and government?

But again, how was the public (the effective public in the sense just explained) to be indifferent to the pages of Rousseau?—the piercing invectives, the soothing sophistries, the

warm and splendid visions of this most eloquent of men; the deceiver of the imagination of others, the victim of his own—how were these to be rendered harmless and of no avail?—By the extremes of wretchedness exhibited in the metropolis of France?—the painted emptiness of its vanities, in the absence of the domestic virtues?—the ignorance and profligacy of its populace, set off by the dissolute effrontery of its court and nobles?

But, lastly, amid this general debasement of maxims and of manners, was it for the low schools, the materialists, the atheists, and the obscene writers, to blush and to stand silent and appalled?

I must leave this subject to your own reflections. Assuredly the reign of Louis XV. will afford you ample materials. In what a rapid manner have we passed along the surface of them, yet how many and how weighty have been the topics to which your curiosity has been directed!

Through nearly the whole of the last century, the great kingdom of France has been seen under the direction of cabinets that continued to indulge themselves in every enterprise of ambition and injustice.

Beginning with a debt to which her revenue was unequal, and persevering still further to accumulate a weight so dangerous to her monarchy; determined always to take the same part in the politics of Europe, and incur the same expenses as if she had been possessed of funds adequate to discharge the interest of her old debts, and even to meet the interest of new ones. Unhappy country, destroying and destroyed! disturbing every potentate and neighbour, and ruled in the mean time by debauched kings, with their impudent mistresses and daring ministers, who could waste not only in wars, but in excesses of every kind of ostentation or of profligacy, the earnings that could be wrung from the hands of peasants, and from the incomes of the laborious and virtuous classes of the community. Continue the picture: the clergy and the nobility, you will remember, are in the mean time seen to refuse their contingents to the general expense; and the hereditary maxim of the privileged orders is to be this—"that they, forsooth, are not to be taxed." Every outrage is in the mean time to be offered to public opinion. The parliaments, the

only images of the nation, then constitutionally existing, are to be kept by the court in a continual warfare, sometimes of a religious, sometimes of a financial nature.

At length a bold and bad man, the Duc D'Aiguillon, because he is a peer of the realm and a favourite, is to be protected in the mal-administration of one of the provinces; every contempt of national justice is to be shown, and at last the very parliaments themselves are by violence to be extinguished and put down, as if no law and no will were to be left in the land but that of the king and his mistresses, or some base parasite like the chancellor Maupeou, who could prefer the smiles and honours of beings like Louis XV. and la Comtesse Dubarri to the consciousness of rectitude, and the approbation of the wise and good.

But while the dreadful harvest of all these offences is ripening, present at this moment to your imagination men like Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Diderot. The doctrines and corruptions, for instance, of an ecclesiastical establishment, where ceremony was to supply the place of piety, and a wretch like Du Bois could be made a dignitary, were ridiculed and exposed by one writer; just views of policy and government were exhibited in the mean time by another; lastly, the enthusiasm that sighs for unattainable perfection was excited by a third: the abused and the oppressed were told their wrongs, but the giddy and the ignorant were called upon to redress them. Government, it appeared, was to exercise authority without any assistance from the natural associations of the human mind. The members of society were to go through the duties of common life without the virtue of self-denial; at length even the wise man (such are sometimes the awful follies of the wise)—even the wise man was to say in his heart, "There is no God."

These are the materials for your reflection as you close the history of Louis XV. Fewer and less than these they cannot possibly be. Where are you to find lessons if not here?

The rulers of mankind—the gentry, the nobility, the clergy, the magistrates of a country, its princes and its monarchs, by no means excluding its still more powerful monarchs, the men of genius—all these seem but too often to suppose that the general laws of the moral world are to be suspended or new-

modelled for their particular convenience, enjoyments, or repose.

They gratify their passions, whether of literary vanity, political ambition, or personal sensuality; they exercise no self-government, and show no public spirit; they are base and selfish, or they are daring and dissolute, or they are profane and irreligious; they disregard the ordinances of their country, corrupt its manners, or destroy its opinions, each according to his own particular temperament or temptation; and then they know not, it seems, how it happens that the public opinion becomes unfavourable to the establishments of the state; that the lower orders are wretched and immoral; that whenever an occasion offers they are even mutinous and savage.

These things are, however, but too intelligible.

But even more may ensue, and calamities still more dreadful—a revolution may ensue—a community declines, the storm gathers, the scene sinks deeper and deeper into shade, the darkness at length comes, and the tempest. But who shall abide their coming? The cry is then heard, and the lamentation; there is at length silence, for the judgment is accomplished.

The historian shudders as he draws aside the rent and bloody veil, and the philosopher sees traced in the footsteps of the Destroying Angel the dreadful lesson that he has so often explained in vain.

# LECTURE V.

## LOUIS XVI.—TURGOT.—NECKER, ETC.

*The first Course of these Lectures on the French Revolution, down to the close of the Constituent Assembly, was delivered in* 1826; *the subsequent Course in* 1827.

THE four lectures that you have last heard were originally intended to be the conclusion of my labours, and at the same time to prepare my hearers for the future study of the French revolution. The revolution itself I always thought too vast a subject for me to attempt, and that it must be left to my successors; but I became at last uneasy, on observing the hourly importance of every thing connected with this great event. It was but too plain that the youth of this place should not be suffered by me to go into the world without having had their attention directed in some general manner, however imperfect, to those opinions and events which would affect the interests and politics of it, not only while they were allowed to exist in it, but long after they were passed away and were no more. Sentiments like these were only impressed more deeply upon my mind by further reflection, and I therefore now proceed to offer you what I have written, only under what appeared to me the necessity of the case, and the duty of making every effort in my power, and not from the slightest expectation that I could deliver lectures on the French Revolution, that I could for a moment consider as worthy of a theme so extensive and so important.

In the lectures that I delivered on the reign of Louis XIV., I endeavoured to give some general notion of the monarchy which he may be said to have created; of the splendid edifice which the revolution levelled with the dust. Unless you know what it was, you cannot understand what the patriots and

agitators of that period either attempted or effected. Voltaire's Age of Louis XIV. will afford you the best account of it, and in the shortest time.

In the lectures that followed in the long reign of Louis XV., I endeavoured to explain how the minds of the French people became alienated from their government. I alluded to the financial disputes and the religious disputes between the court and parliaments; the manner in which these parliaments (judicial bodies) were exiled and recalled, broken up, and at last destroyed; how the public feelings, political, moral, and religious, were in every way outraged and defied; how an opening was thus made for any new opinions that could be proposed.

I then endeavoured to give you some notion of the new opinions that in fact were proposed; their various nature, philosophic, visionary, anarchical, sceptical, and atheistical, immoral and licentious, obscene and disgusting; and again, of the various descriptions of men, and of the very extraordinary men, by whom they were exhibited to the country; and you will now, I hope, be prepared to receive the description I am about to give of the late French revolution; to give in a very few words. It was the conflict of the new opinions with the old; apparently it was only the fall of a government under the weight of its financial engagements. But there was no reason why Louis might not have called the States General or any public assemblies together, to provide for the contingencies of the state, without being precipitated from his throne, unless the times had been of a very peculiar nature. They certainly were so, and I have endeavoured to describe how they became so; the conduct of the rulers and the privileged orders, and the conduct and writings of the men of genius of every description so acted and re-acted upon each other, and upon the community, that the revolution we have seen—the conflict of the new opinions and the old—was the result.

I must now, and in the succeeding lectures, enter a little into the detail, and you must observe the statements and opinions I make, and remember them while you read the history for yourselves. Public lectures are always but a preparation for subsequent study. It is not easy to form reasonable views, and you must be therefore patient while you find

me hereafter endeavouring to estimate the motives and conduct of every person and party that appears, in a manner that may seem to you somewhat minute and tedious.

But it is from such descriptions that instruction is to be gathered; it is during the first opening scenes, and during the approach of revolutions, that lessons are to be found; the wisdom or folly of the parties is then of the greatest consequence. The point is always how revolutions are to be avoided while reforms are accomplished; and during the present lectures, the patience of my hearers must be often exercised, while I endeavour to exhibit what were the mistakes and faults that were committed by all parties in their turn.

I have been assured that no fair relative justice has been done to those who took a part in these memorable transactions; the French historians on the revolution, Mignet, Thiers, and others, are totally intolerable; introducing into the subject the doctrine of necessity, and resolving every thing into a sort of concatenated series of events, of which no further account need be given, but that they could not have happened otherwise. The province of the reflecting historian, on a supposition of this kind, is at an end.

I shall advert to this point hereafter; it is sufficient for the present to enter a protest against all such views of history or its concerns.

I enter upon my subject with views far different, hoping to exhibit to you the relative merits and demerits of all concerned for the purposes of your instruction; and this may not be so easy a task, as has been theirs, who have neither praise nor censure which they can morally bestow; but it is a task which must be performed, at least attempted; and aware of its difficulty, I have not presumed to present myself here, and read to you what has not been considered by others as well as myself. I have requested and received the assistance of one whom I think eminently fitted to render me this kind and necessary office; a very judicious and intelligent man on all occasions, and one well conversant with the occurrences and actors in these memorable scenes—Mr. Mallet. In consequence of his suggestions I have made additions to the lectures, as they originally stood; in consequence of his objections, I have made modifications of what I had written, that

are material, and when our sentiments differed (they sometimes did so, though rather in degree than in kind), and when I could not sincerely give up my opinion, I have incorporated his remarks into my lectures, and they will appear in conjunction with my own, in such a manner that you will, without observing it, in fact be left to judge between us; nor do I think that the distrust of my own judgment, which I have thus described to you, should be forgotten by any of you on any public occasion; such are the imperfections of the mind, and such its occasional eclipses.

To proceed, then, to the consideration of the great subject before us.

My first observation is a startling one. The French revolution must be considered as having failed: in every immediate and proper sense of the word, it failed.

No beautiful system of civil and religious liberty was seen to arise in France, and they, who wished well to the happiness of mankind and who had looked forward to the progressive improvement of the human species, saw swept from their view all the splendid visions on which they had so fondly gazed. What cause for so cruel a disappointment to the expectations of the wise and good? 'There had been long a conflict between the old opinions and the new; the government was lost in public estimation; the king was without energy, ill fitted for his situation; the privileged orders were too selfish; the patriots too violent; the great military powers of Europe interfered.'

Such is a short explanation of this deplorable event—the failure of this great experiment.

It is a great calamity to mankind when the patriots of a country fail; they are the salt of the earth. We are placed by our Almighty Master in a world where nothing can be obtained without enterprise and effort; but the conclusion from the failure of such men is, that enterprise and effort are in vain.

It may be, however, useful to allude in such passing manner as the nature of these lectures will admit, to the great scenes of this interesting history, to see what instruction can be reaped from it, and what estimate can be formed of it, asking ourselves what we could have done, what attempted in each

different situation, each crisis that will be presented to us. It is easy to blame; of two different courses that might have been pursued, it is easy to see, when one has failed, that the other should have been preferred; but what we are to do is this: we are to try to place ourselves in the situation of those who had alternatives before them and were obliged to act; we must, above all, try not to judge from the event. Mistakes were no doubt committed, but the great lesson of the whole is the wisdom, the duty in all political affairs, of moderation, a lesson that will be thought by some too trite to be worth the drawing, and by others too tame and uninteresting to be likely to be observed by such absurd and furious beings as mankind are composed of; yet it is the great lesson of the whole, and it is the lesson that by me, at least, must for ever be inculcated.

The first book I would have you turn to is Lacretelle's History of the Eighteenth Century—not his Précis of the Revolution, but his History of the Eighteenth Century.

We have already passed through the reign of Louis XV. We can now go on with the fourteenth book, the Accession of Louis XVI. to the throne. You will find the situation of things to be something of the following nature. The young king was grave, decorous, sensible, modest, pious, virtuous, and deeply interested in the happiness of his people—such was the young king. Louis, just twenty, was happy to call to his assistance the experience of the Count de Maurepas, a statesman that was old enough to have been a counsellor to Louis XIV. The ministers of Louis XV., you will see, were dismissed; among them the chancellor Maupeou, who had contrived the destruction of the parliaments. The celebrated Turgot was called into office.

A new system was therefore evidently adopted. Turgot was the favourite of the philosophers, and he was soon removed from the marine, where the old minister had originally thought proper to place him, to the situation of the comptroller-general of the finances. You will now remember what I have said of the new opinions. It was in the finances that Turgot was expected to introduce the most important reforms, these to be followed by reforms in the laws, and

these again, by reforms in the manners of the country and all the ancient institutions of the monarchy.

Now that such hopes should be entertained not only by men of intelligence, but by the young monarch himself, was highly natural. Benevolence was the ruling passion of his nature; this may assuredly be asserted, and must never through the whole of this history be forgotten; but he was born a king, no doubt, and had his appropriate difficulties and temptations: hitherto we see no mistake. You will find in the notes of Lacretelle an affecting letter from Turgot, addressed to the young king.

"We will have no bankruptcies," said the philosophic minister, "no augmentation of the imposts, no loans. I shall have to combat abuses of every kind; to combat those who are benefited by them, and even the kindness, sire, of your own nature. I shall be feared, hated, and calumniated; but the affecting goodness with which you pressed my hands in yours, to witness your acceptance of my devotion to your service, is never to be obliterated from my recollection, and must support me under every trial."

This letter is surely very creditable to both parties. The minister had said, you will observe, "we will have no bankruptcies;" and I will now stop for a moment to mention, that there is in the community a great looseness of thought upon this subject of a national bankruptcy. You hear people speaking "of a national sponge," of "sweeping away the stocks at once," as if the whole was a castle in the air, which might be made to disappear, and no one be affected.

It is a pity that such light reasoners do not ask themselves what must be the consequence if those who now receive their dividends were to receive them no longer. This is a very short and intelligible question. Do they not know, does not every one know, that they who receive dividends are not so much a few rich capitalists as widows and orphans—the helpless and the unprotected, particularly the female part of the community; the old and the infirm; public institutions of every description; hospitals; places of education: suppose all these without their usual means of support? a partial earthquake or a deluge would in comparison be a trifling calamity.

But to return. The finances were the great point to be considered; the minister had no doubt directed his view to the real difficulty. The revenue, through a long succession of years, had continually fallen short of the expenditure. There could be no repose for the monarch, no real security for his crown, unless some happy alteration could be effected in the management of the finances. You have already, in considering the reign of Louis XV., seen sufficiently the importance of this part of the subject; but the question was, what could be attempted, supposing, as was the case, that the minister was enlightened, and the monarch benevolent. 'Great improvements in the system of taxation; in the nature of the taxes, in the collection of them, in the expenditure of them; again, great reforms in the expenditure of the court; an active and skilful resistance, a sort of war to be waged against abuses of every kind, against profligacy and folly, wherever they might appear: these improvements were possible.'

But when all this was done, all this it was evident would be insufficient unless something more could be accomplished.

The fact was, that the privileged orders were exempted to a certain degree from the taxes to which the rest of the country was exposed. Now, unless they could be brought to bear their part, no real relief could be afforded to the monarchy. The accumulated deficit, the annual deficit, were each too great.

To accomplish so desirable an end was the great object, was the great hinge on which turned the happiness of the community, the authority of the monarch, the safety of the privileged orders themselves, and unless these orders could be brought to rise superior to their own views of self-interest, and the prejudices of their birth, and even their views of the constitution of their country, there could, in truth, be no chance for the improvement or even the welfare of France, in the state of things which had arisen from the expenses of government on one side, and the prevalence of the new opinions on the other.

Of all this Turgot seems to have been well aware. He had announced himself as decidedly of opinion that an impost must be fairly and equally levied upon proprietors of every description; and certainly this was a doctrine perfectly right

and just. What meanness in the privileged orders to resist it; what selfishness, what guilt; but what folly, particularly when the country had evidently begun to inquire and to think; what truth so obvious as this, that nothing can be secure that is not agreeable to the moral feelings of mankind. Still the minister and the monarch were to take into their account the inherent baseness and stupidity of mankind on all such occasions; and the student should himself now consider how, in the situation of the monarch and the minister, he would have endeavoured to procure from the privileged orders so reasonable and so necessary a sacrifice.

It will not be easy for him to determine upon his measure, but certainly he will not, I think, propose the measure that really was adopted—the recall of the parliaments.

If he turns to the reign of Louis XV. he will see in what manner these bodies were superseded and destroyed. But why renew their existence? They were connected with the privileged orders rather than with the king or the people.

Their doctrine had been, that a tax could not be legally levied, unless first enregistered by them. What chance for any great scheme of improvement in the finances, such as the minister contemplated, if their consent was first to be made necessary. Their proper office was the administration of justice; other courts had been, on their suppression, erected: what need of their revival?

What but opposition could be expected from them to such measures as intelligent men would have proposed, such as the minister himself no doubt meditated, and as he had probably already, in the whole or in part, introduced to the consideration of the young monarch. The free commerce of grain, for instance; the suppression of oppressive duties—that on salt, the gabelle; the abolition of the corvées, or the repairing of the roads by the peasantry; the abolition of tyrannical feudal usages; the imposition of a land-tax, from which the nobles and clergy should not be exempt; a more merciful criminal code; a civil code, improved, and throughout the whole of France consistent and every where the same. What hope for projects like these, particularly the last, if they were to pass through the ordeals of the parliaments?

Turgot was well aware how unfavourable to his plans

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would be the restoration of the parliaments, and he opposed it, as did the minister of war; but the old courtier, the Count de Maurepas, prevailed, and the parliaments were in an evil hour recalled. It is not easy to say what could be the motive with Maurepas, unless jealousy of Turgot; but with the king, at least, it was surely a mistake. The measure was indeed popular, no reason this for its adoption, but rather the contrary. The king was on this account only the more likely to create a power which he could not control; Malesherbes was added to the ministry, a valuable auxiliary to Turgot; but in the event, what was the fate of this minister of reform, of Turgot? Maurepas was not faithful to him; the privileged orders were soon united against him, and the parliaments and the clergy forgot their differences, the better to oppose him. The queen committed the mistake of uniting with the old minister and the noblesse against the reformers, as they were called, and when Turgot at length produced his six edicts, a clamour arose, that seemed to indicate that all the very elements of the public safety had been endangered. The five last of these edicts had reference only to the proper management of the interior traffic and business of the metropolis, more particularly the commerce of grain, but the first was the suppression of the abominable corvées; and the roads were, by the new edict, to be repaired, and the expense defrayed by a contribution from which the privileged orders were *not* to be exempt; hinc illæ lacrymæ—the nobles and the prelates, it seems, considered themselves as degraded if they were to contribute to the repair of roads; and they would no doubt have declared that their dignity and their existence, the very rights of property itself, were endangered, if they were now for the first time, they would have said, in the history of the monarchy, to be subjected to the visits of the tax-gatherer. It is in the sentiments and the conduct of these privileged orders, on this and on all similar occasions, former or subsequent, that you are to find *one of the greatest lessons* to be derived from this French Revolution. Nothing, as I must for ever repeat, that is not agreeable to the fair, obvious conclusions of the moral feelings of mankind, can be in politics secure. These moral feelings may slumber for years, for ages, but if by any chance they are awakened, the wise and the good will

conform to them in time, will conform to them with all possible expedition, will make what sacrifices are necessary, and the truth is, that if sacrifices are made early, such sacrifices may be found light and be little felt; not so, if delayed; no wisdom, no moral sensibility of this kind, was on *this* occasion shown by the parliaments and the privileged orders, and it never was on any subsequent occasion shown, till too late. They saw not exactly their situation, probably no one in France at the time did; but were they not calling for reforms and sacrifices from the king, from every one but themselves? Was not this at least plain; and was it not plain, also, that the peasants and the public were alone contributing to an expense which they themselves were bound in common justice to share? Were they not taking the business of reform from the king and his ministers, where alone it could be safely lodged, to be undertaken by themselves: and with whose assistance, it may be asked, if they moved not in concert with the king and his ministers—with whose assistance, but as in the former times of the parliaments, the assistance of the people—the assistance of the people! And this, then, was the expedient of the parliaments and the privileged orders, for the accomplishment of their own, and the happiness and prosperity of the community. In the event, you will see, that the minister Turgot was dismissed, that the excellent Malesherbes retired, and that the nobles, the parliaments, and the clergy were triumphant. But triumphant over whom? Over a benevolent monarch, and a patriotic minister. Turgot soon after died, early in 1781; his epitaph might have been the couplet of the poet:

> "Truths would you teach, or save a sinking land,
> All fear, none aid you, and few understand."

No doubt the possibility of a revolution little occurred to the privileged orders, yet there is a remarkable passage in a letter of our own Lord Chesterfield, so early as the year 1753, twenty-three years *before* these proceedings of the parliaments, and before the times of Turgot, which shows plainly that this possibility was clearly seen by him. "Wherever you are," says he, writing to his son, "inform yourself minutely of, and attend particularly to the affairs of France; they grow serious,

and in my opinion will grow more and more so every day; . . . . . the people are poor, consequently discontented: those who have religion are divided in their notions of it, which is saying, that they hate one another; the clergy will not forgive the parliament, nor the parliament forgive them: the army must, without doubt, take (in their own minds at least) different parts in all these disputes, which upon occasion would break out; armies, though always the supporters and tools of absolute power for the time being, are always the destroyers of it too, by frequently changing the hands in which they think proper to lodge it. . . . . The French nation reasons freely, which they never did before, upon matters of religion and government, and begin to be spregiudicati, to have got rid of their prejudices; the officers do so too, in short, all the symptoms which I have ever met with in history, previous to great changes and revolutions in government, now exist, and daily increase in France."

This was written in the year 1753. His lordship seems to have fixed his eye more particularly on the religious dissensions between the court and the parliaments, the Jesuits and the Jansenists, but he had observed also the freedom of discussion that was making its appearance. A civil war seems to have been his expectation, and the privileged orders, therefore, twenty-three years afterwards, should have shown a little more discernment than they did. His concluding remark was not exactly verified by the event. "I am glad of it," says he, "the rest of Europe will be the quieter, and have time to recover." He had been evidently in the habit of considering France as the great disturber of the peace of mankind.

Expectations of changes and revolutions, views of this kind, are no doubt often entertained lightly, taken up hastily, and produced at random. But this is not a passage of any such nature; and it comes from a man of the world and a statesman.

Of what value would such a man as Lord Chesterfield have been to his order in France on the occasions which followed, and how reasonable and prophetic would have been the advice he would have given. I shall have quite failed in what I have already delivered in this lecture, if I have not excited your

curiosity with regard to the origin and first opening of this French revolution. It is in these opening scenes that the great lessons of instruction are to be always found. No philosopher, no statesman can render his country or mankind so great a service as to advance their civil or religious liberties, and yet secure them from these dreadful revolutions; to reform, to improve, but without violence and bloodshed: and to attain a wisdom of this exalted cast, no means so natural as the long and careful meditation of the rise and first progress of great changes, like these we are now surveying.

I have already given you a faint, general sketch of this part of the subject; but I will dwell upon it a little longer.

The situation of the king is the great point of curiosity; he is benevolent, and wishes the happiness of his people; he is calm and sensible, and therefore summons to his assistance an ancient counsellor M. de Maurepas, and, at the same time, a man then celebrated for his intelligence, and for those more enlarged views which the gradual progress of civilization and knowledge had introduced to the notice of the French nation —M. Turgot. All this Louis does, but Louis was born a king, and had the feelings natural to his birth and situation; he could not mean so to alter the institutions of his country that he should appear to himself to be king no longer; and any philosopher and any patriot that required this of him was unfeeling and unjust. He was surrounded, too, by a court (the queen at its head) who could not be expected to see any merit in any minister or any system that at all disturbed their usual routine of opinions and enjoyments; beside him stood a noblesse and a clergy, among whom many men of intelligence and patriotism might be found; of more, indeed, than could be expected to belong to those bodies in their collective capacity; but the question was, whether those bodies could be persuaded to act with any feeling for the lower orders, with any due sense of the sacrifices that were now required of them; for on this depended the safety of their monarchy, the repose of their king, the real security of themselves. Their organ at this time seemed to be the parliaments, particularly the parliament of Paris, the members of which had long been engaged in struggles with the crown, appeared to be animated

with a wish to save the country from oppression, more particularly from taxation, but seemed ready to unite with the privileged orders in resistance to every measure that the king could propose, if any taxation was thus to reach the privileged orders themselves, as well as the rest of the community.

Now, I ask what more unhappy state of things can be conceived for the monarch? What is he to do, and where is his power? He is quite young; the patriotic minister Turgot would go far greater lengths than could be intelligible to him, than could be agreeable to his other minister, to an old courtier, the experienced friend on whom the king naturally depended, than could be endured by the privileged orders, or thought of with any patience by the court.

What now could the king do? What but endeavour to turn to the best advantage he could the intelligence and sentiments of all concerned, and make such attempts for the welfare of the community as might appear likely to succeed. He therefore proposes the six edicts of Turgot, which I have mentioned, to the parliaments. The privileged orders are in these edicts only required to contribute like the rest of the community to the repair of the roads, nothing more; but no, the edicts are resisted by the parliaments (the privileged orders had taken the alarm). The king then insists upon their being enregistered, and calls a bed of justice.

But the result of the whole is, that the patriotic minister is dismissed, and the edicts gradually forgotten. This no doubt the king should not have submitted to; though young, he should have seen that nothing unreasonable had been proposed, and that his patriotic minister must be supported while he was only proposing what was reasonable, and while it was clear that, sooner or later, and in some way or other, sacrifices of their personal interests must be procured from the privileged orders, or the finances fall into the most irremediable confusion, his own happiness be at an end, and possibly even his crown endangered.

The student should, I think, fix his attention very earnestly on this particular part of the history.

It is probable that a monarch not only of benevolence but of decision of character, who would have insisted upon these edicts, and carried his minister through all his difficulties,

might thus have prevented the Revolution; if the king could but have seen his danger at so early a period as this, all might have been well; but he did not, nor indeed did any one at the time. He was young and inexperienced, and even if he had speculated more deeply and successfully on his situation, he was not of a temperament to confront and overpower resistance.

All through the history of the Revolution, and from the very first appearance of it, this want of character in the king must be considered as the great misfortune of all; as contributing to its progress and failure, as fatal to his people, and still more fatal to himself.

On this occasion it operated most unhappily, and whatever we may say of the king in his existing situation of youthfulness and ignorance, his counsellors at least are not to be forgiven; nor is he himself, if Turgot, as probably he did, made proper representations to him, and presented to his consideration views that were reasonable, and such as were fitted somewhat to alarm him, anxious and uneasy as he already was. The case before them all, the king included, was simple, the steps few: the finances, for instance, were to be repaired; the immunities, therefore, of the privileged orders were to be disturbed, modified, more or less conceded: this could not be done without a struggle; but it was evident if the king gave up his minister, and retired from this struggle, that the struggle might then come to be, not between the privileged orders and the king, but between them and the community; the king withdrawn from the field, to be rendered insignificant, and perhaps put aside or trampled down amid the chances of the combat.

These are reflections, it may be said, only obvious from the event; the danger, it may, however, be replied, the danger might not be obvious, but the faults that the king was committing, these really were obvious; and he is not to be pardoned for the commission of them. 'He should have prevented Turgot from producing these edicts, or supported him in them; he did worst of all, he suffered them to be proposed; he made the parliaments, as I have already mentioned, enregister them by a bed of justice, that is, by force; and he then gradually and silently abandoned the minister and the edicts together.' But

the defects of the character of Louis—for defects he had—were but too important; a want of rational confidence in himself, an unwillingness to rule any one, while born the ruler of millions, born and not created by his own choice, and this is his excuse, and must always be remembered; and positive vices, and outrageous faults would have been less fatal to himself and to his country than was this unhappy failing (this want of character) at this singular crisis.

What was to be his situation when both the edicts and the minister were gone. Probity and wisdom, if attempting any opposition to the privileged orders, had evidently no chance at court, even when honoured by his protection. But what hope was there then for the finances, that is, for his own repose, perhaps security? You will easily conceive the situation of the court, and what must necessarily have been the character of any *new* comptroller of the finances. How little agreeable were the sounds of economy, of reform, the total want of all real ability, that must have belonged to any minister that could now undertake, on any opposite system, the post, from which Turgot had been driven.

One remark is indeed to be made; the king, amidst all the frivolity and folly, whether grave or gay, that surrounded him, had still his anxieties directed to the right point. He was never at ease about the finances; his attention was still fixed upon them—this is merit and sense. And, at last, in a very singular manner, which you will see explained in the histories, a Swiss banker, M. Necker, was called to the administration of them; the old minister, Maurepas, still remaining the minister, and at the head of affairs. The maxim of Turgot was, "no new loans and no new impositions." This was tolerably hardy, when the annual deficit was twenty-five millions of livres; but Necker's was even more so, "new loans, and yet no new taxes."

This system might indeed save him and the king from contests with the parliaments, the nobility, and the clergy, but how was the interest of these loans to be paid? By the suppression of offices, Necker would have replied, reforms in the expenditure of the court, in the collection of the taxes, and by all the savings of a very vigilant economy; but economy was apparently a very inadequate resource for a minister of finance,

of French finance, to depend upon. The loans, however, succeeded; they were made, and they were registered by the parliaments, though not without difficulty.

But, in the midst of these transactions came on the perilous question of war with England. The North American colonies had declared themselves independent. An opportunity was offered to France of humbling her ancient rival; how was it to be resisted? how, by a French cabinet? by the French people? It is understood that the king, when he signed the treaty with the revolted colonies, could not help saying to the minister, Vergennes, "You will remember, sir, that this is contrary to my opinion." The king was surely right; it was no time for France to engage herself in a war when the finances were already in a state of confusion. She had received no offence from England; had no grounds of interference between her and her colonies; the war was unjust on the part of France, as well as impolitic; either reason should have been sufficient. No doubt it would have been difficult to have preserved a neutrality, and the king would have thus rendered himself unpopular: but his want of firmness on this second great occasion, and the want of honour and good faith to England in the ministers of France, must be considered as having mutually contributed, and most materially, to the Revolution that followed. Dodsley's Annual Register for 1789, opens with a statement of the effects produced upon the affairs of France by her interference in the American contest; the influence attributed to it is very great, and I do not conceive exaggerated. I refer you to the work itself. Those of the young French officers who distinguished themselves in America, (Fayette and others), became afterwards the patriots and heroes of the French Revolution. The appearance of Franklin at Paris was quite an event.

While the war with England continues, the history of this French Revolution seems suspended. Necker is the minister of finance, and is employed in making provision for the expenses of the war by all the possible expedients of economy. This would have surely been but a strange system of finance—loans, and the interest to be paid by particular measures of economy—even if there had been no war, and even if the court had been virtuous and patriotic; but the court was not

so; it was giddy, frivolous, and expensive. The king was too easily satisfied with his own privations and sacrifices, and thought that doing this, he had done every thing; and he was too indulgent to the queen and the light troop of pleasure by which she was surrounded. The situation of Necker was indeed deplorable; the apathy of Maurepas, the facility of the king, the caprices and folly of the court. "Never shall I forget," he says in a work he published in 1791, "the long dark staircase of M. de Maurepas, the terror and the melancholy with which I used to ascend it, uncertain of the success of some idea that had occurred to me, likely, if carried into effect, to produce an increase of the revenue; but likely, at the same time, to fall severely, though justly, on some one or other; the address, the expedients, I had to make use of to succeed; the sort of hesitation and diffidence with which I ventured to intermingle in my representations any of those great fundamental truths, those maxims of justice and of right, with which my own heart was animated. I was really like the ancient Sully when he stood surrounded by the young and tittering courtiers of Louis XIII." Victories, it seems, were the hopes of Necker in this unseasonable war; and then an honourable peace, he thought, would open all the world to the French commerce, and the influx from the customs would render other taxes unnecessary.

Necker was popular with the monied men, and carried his loans and his annuities very successfully. They were enregistered, but with some difficulty, by the parliament of Paris. He met there, however, an acute and violent opponent in D'Espremesnil, who inspired his colleagues, young and old, with an ardour and a boldness like his own; turned the grave legal court of the parliament of Paris into a political assembly, like the House of Commons in England, and at last talked of an appeal to the States General. The words fell with little effect upon the ear of the public at this moment; but, twelve years after, they were the signal of the Revolution.

Opposition of this kind from the parliaments, and many secret misgivings, must no doubt have not a little disquieted the mind of Necker. He meant well to the country, but was in the first place faithful to the king he served. He saw the wonders produced by credit in England. He had been in

that country, and a free government must have appeared to him the secret of the whole.

Publicity of accounts, and representation of the people, these must have occurred to him as the real remedies for all the miseries of the great empire of France; for the disorders of the finances; the oppressions of the people; the vices of the nobility and of the privileged orders; the anxieties and insecurity of the monarch.

But how were such objects to be accomplished or to be approached? The kingdom of France, as you are already aware, was originally composed of a number of small and separate kingdoms, which had gradually been forced or persuaded to accumulate round one great central province. The great merit of Henry IV. was, that he kept them together; and, during the time of Richelieu and Louis XIV. the whole kingdom got consolidated, and became at last one and indivisible; but each province had its laws and its customs; many of them (the Pays d'Etat, as they were called*), had

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*The great vassals of France had always endeavoured to have seignorial possessions in France; it had been the object of every succeeding monarch to reunite the great fiefs to the crown.

They accomplished their object so far, that at the accession of Louis XIII. the seventy-two great fiefs of France were united to the crown, and all the feudal lords attended at the States General in 1614. (Louis XIII.) In Butler you will see a table of the re-union of the fiefs to the crown, and an enumeration of the additions that were thus made by each monarch from Hugh Capet to Louis XV.

With respect to law, eachseignory had its particular usages, scarcely two alike. Charles VII. in 1453, endeavoured to ascertain them. Forty-two years elapsed before the customs of any one place were verified. The measure lingered, and was resumed in the reign of Louis XII., and about the year 1619 (time of Louis XIII.) was completed. The customs of each place formed into one collection, was called the Grand Coutumier de France. The best edition of it is in four volumes folio.

made distinct bargains with the crown, which were still in full effect; and any rational system of commercial intercourse, certainly any system of uniform jurisprudence, seemed impossible. (You will easily understand this part of the subject from Mr. C. Butler's publications, his Horæ Juridicæ, and his work on the Revolutions of the German Empire.) How could a minister like Necker, a Protestant from Geneva, reduce to order such a chaos of feudal usages and opinions? What, again, could he effect on the subject of the representation of the people? The States General, the original representation of the country, had been long disused, and it was evidently a most perilous experiment to revive them. The parliament was sufficiently factious and troublesome; and these difficulties, that must have presented themselves to the meditations of this philosophic minister, would only have appeared more alarming and insuperable if he had endeavoured to discuss them with his youthful sovereign; who, benevolent as he was, was neither enterprising nor resolute, was still a pupil to his ancient counsellor, Maurepas, and devoted to the queen; who, like the court around her, could have little taste for reforms and improvements, and the timely counsels of prospective wisdom.

But one of the measures which Necker now adopted was of a very important nature, and in itself not a little objectionable. He published his Compte Rendû; that is, the Report he had furnished to the king, of the finances; in other words, he gave publicity to the national accounts. He unveiled every mystery that they contained; that is, he threw himself, for the support of his financial schemes, on the candour and intelligence of the community.

No doubt, what he meant by this measure was to persuade or morally oblige the privileged orders to contribute to the public burden. It was but too evident to him, as it must have always been to every thinking man, as it had been to Turgot, as it must have been to the king himself, that this contribution of the privileged orders was the great remedy, was at least the first more immediate and practical remedy for the evils that embarrassed the government.

But surely this publication of the Compte Rendû was, on the whole, a measure, the expediency of which may be very rea-

sonably doubted, if not entirely denied. What good could have been expected to result from it, by any very sensible and sagacious man? The new opinions did not then want fresh fuel, or any new and authentic means of attack. Necker knew enough of the privileged orders to doubt the influence of reasonable motives on their minds. The great accusation against this minister has been always that of personal vanity, a love, a passion for public applause.

Materials for such an accusation may perhaps be here found. It is not very agreeable to see defects of this kind in the character of a benevolent, virtuous, and enlightened man, but if they appear, they must be noted.

But the next great measure of Necker was to improve, if possible, the constitution of the country; to introduce some representation of the community into the system of the government; to create some bodies that should be the organs of the respectable and intelligent part of the people. In this manner he might have hoped gradually and silently to extinguish the political importance of the parliament of Paris, and eventually to control the selfish passions of the privileged orders. He seems to have done what alone could be done; to have availed himself of existing institutions, and to have endeavoured to modify and wield them to his purposes. Good was chiefly to be expected, he must have thought, from gradual amelioration, and training the people to better habits and modes of political thought and government. He was, perhaps, too late, but this was his misfortune, not his fault. He revived the idea of Turgot, and formed a project of provincial administrations. According to Necker's management, these bodies would have become a sort of States General, not collected at Paris, but established in every province, consisting of nobility, clergy, and (equal in number to the other two) of Tiers Etat.

The provinces of the Pays d'Etat, Languedoc, Burgundy, &c. had assemblies already of this description. Many advantages would have been thus obtained; the vexations arising from the immediate agency of the officers of the crown, the taxgatherers, the intendants of the provinces, would have been thus avoided; the dangers to be feared from the parliament of Paris weakened; the dangers to be feared from Paris

itself escaped; and a step made, an important one no doubt, yet on the whole, a cautious one, towards the accomplishment of those objects which the patriotic minister and benevolent monarch had equally at heart.[x] You will see some account of this part of our subject in the work of M^e^. de Stael; it has not, I conceive, been considered with sufficient attention by the writers on the French Revolution, not even by M^e^. de Stael herself. Yet what she says is valuable and curious. To me it appears among the first measures that the king should have attempted to carry, and he should have attached himself firmly to Necker, as the only minister fitted to serve him. The experiment is considered by M^e^. de Stael as having been successful in the two provinces, where it was tried; but a work upon the subject, addressed to the king by Necker himself, in which his ultimate views were displayed, having come to the knowledge of the parliament, so much opposition was excited, that the minister was overpowered. The minister, it seems, had no object but economy and the welfare of the state; and no powerful friend in the court but the monarch himself, who, in a crisis like this, was unhappily from his nature unfitted for the office.

[x]The parliament saw, from Necker's own work, that their own influence, that their own existence, as a political body, if his provincial assemblies succeeded, would gradually cease; and the privileged orders saw, that new powers and authorities were, according to Necker's plan, to arise in the state, which could be of no advantage to them; but, on the contrary, must eventually, more or less, deprive them of their immunities, and withdraw from them their prerogatives. The old minister therefore combined with every one around him, in and about the court and his more immediate sphere, and Necker was disposed of as a common grievance, and dismissed from the ministry.

You will, I hope, not be unwilling to know a little more of this measure, proposed by Necker, so early as 1780 and 1781, —these provincial assemblies.

1st. There is a Memoir of Turgot relative to the subject; and 2dly, a Memoir of Necker. Both ministers had seen that it was desirable to emancipate the crown from the interference of the parliaments, that it was necessary to make the privileged orders contribute; and that these points could not be

accomplished without borrowing for the sovereign some authority from the community.

Turgot seems to have referred himself entirely to the Tiers Etat, and to have made use of no other order in his organization of these provincial assemblies; but Necker avoided this error, and composed his assemblies of all the orders in the state, in the way, you will see hereafter, that the States General were composed, one-fourth clergy, one-fourth nobility, one-half Tiers Etat.

The views of Turgot, you will also see, were more popular, were probably too popular. Necker's were much less so. These provincial assemblies, consisting of all the three orders, nobility, clergy, and Tiers Etat, seem to have been M. Necker's measure, in truth, his expedient, to make as near an approach as consistently with his duty to his master he thought he could, to the system of representation established in England. The privileged orders, though it must be allowed that, in one way or another, they paid much more than is supposed, still were more exempted from the taxes, that were paid by the country, than, on the one hand, he thought just or agreeable to the interest of the monarchy; yet still, on the other, by force to compel them to pay their quota, and with or without their acquiescence to abolish their privileges, was not what Necker at all considered as practicable, or even as very reasonable; and, on the whole, therefore, he rather hoped insensibly and in due time to accomplish these great objects, by mixing the privileged orders in this manner, with the Tiers Etat, and introducing them gradually to the benefits and practices of the representative system. M. Necker, in this first administration, was certainly ready to compound, to balance and capitulate with evils; and no idle taste for innovation and experiment seems to have formed any part of his character.

You will find the difficulties of Necker's situation and the difficulties of the state well described by M^e^. de Stael. You will see the evils he hoped to remedy, the advantages he hoped to procure, by the establishment of the provincial administrations; even from what I have already said you will have a general notion of them. You will sufficiently comprehend them from her work, and only from her work.

You will then turn to the detail of the history, and you will understand that the old minister, Maurepas, became jealous

of Necker, whose merits and virtues, and whose importance at that time to the state he did not properly comprehend, you will find that the king gave way; and you will see, I think, some reason to suspect that Necker was at the time more interested in his own personal consequence than was exactly necessary; was, in short, too vain. I consider this part of the work of Mad. de Stael as valuable and curious, and I conceive it will be sufficient for me to direct your attention very particularly to it.

It is quite impossible to offer any abridgment or representation of the pages of such a writer. She herself gives only a rapid sketch, all beaming with light and beauty; and it is in vain to provide for the case of those who would not meditate with delight and interest, every thing that can be said by such a writer on such a subject as the French Revolution.

If Necker had succeeded, as he ought to have done, in this, his first administration, the Revolution might have been adjourned, and possibly even prevented. If he had continued to succeed, as he went on, and if the king's mind had gradually opened to the crisis in which he and his kingdom were in truth placed, and to the necessity he lay under of being steady and decisive, there can be little doubt that the government would thus have been regularly ameliorated, and the country at length advanced to a new and more becoming situation of general intelligence and happiness. No such good fortune awaited France or Europe; and with Necker, in 1781, as it appears to me, departed all real hope for any peaceful alterations in the objectionable institutions, inconvenient usages, and unfortunate opinions of the inhabitants of this great country.

One word on the subject of the parliaments and I conclude.

It was the parliaments that were the great obstacles in the way of Necker. It was these bodies that most effectually resisted the plans of Necker for the safety of the monarchy. They were acting perhaps according to the natural prejudices of their situation; but they have been praised by respectable writers, and thought patriotic at this period of their history, and at periods immediately succeeding it. I do not, I confess, see any great reason for such approbation of their conduct. What did they mean, what was the end and intention of their eternal complaints and opposition? Did they wish to

impede the benevolent efforts of the king, and to depress the lower orders, more than they were already depressed? No. Their language was that of a general zeal for the public good. Did they mean to render the privileges of the higher orders less injurious to the interests of the community? No. For they resisted Turgot, and more especially Necker, while endeavouring to effect these ends, at every moment and at every turn. Would they do good themselves? No. Would they suffer others to attempt it? No. What other description than this can be given of men who are factious or wrong headed?

Their great leader, M. D'Esprémesnil saw his mistake too late. He united himself afterwards to the king, and perished like him, a victim to the Revolution.

There is a passage in the Memoirs of Baron de Grimm, on the subject of these parliaments, which you should by all means peruse attentively. He was led to the consideration of them in April, 1789, by the situation of France and the approaching meeting of the States General. He had been long in the country, was by profession an observer, and on every subject was one, very acute and intelligent. You will find his description of these important bodies very unfavourable; and I have myself just expressed sentiments unfavourable also. No doubt I must not forget, nor must the student, that these bodies were the only representatives of the civil and religious liberties of the country, that ever appeared or could well be found. The merit of such resistance, under any arbitrary government, must not be lightly estimated; and the temptations of their situation, and the treatment they had often and even lately received, must not be overlooked. But the question is not that of their prior merits and their general merits, which were very great; but what was the nature of their opposition during the periods we are now more immediately considering—whether that opposition had not all the marks of a factious and seditious opposition. Was it not vague and inextinguishable; not to be either satisfied or pacified; without precise object expressed, or intelligible system proposed; and therefore factious and seditious? Surely it was most injurious to the public weal, at this particular juncture, while Turgot, Necker, Calonne, and others, were endeavouring to assist the king in settling the disordered affairs of this great kingdom.

# LECTURE VI.

## CALONNE.

MY last lecture was employed in endeavouring to describe to you the manner in which the opportunity of probably preventing the revolution was lost during the earlier parts of the king's reign; lost by the want of character in the king, and by the selfishness and blindness of the privileged orders.

My chief topics were the efforts of Turgot to introduce a tax on the nobility and clergy, and the fault the king committed in suffering him to be overpowered by the court and privileged orders, and driven into retirement.

Again, the fault that was next committed by his ministers rather than himself, when they engaged in a manner so impolitic and unjust in our American war, and thus gave such circulation and energy to the new opinions.

I next alluded to the efforts that were made by Necker for the improvement of the finances, and more particularly the amelioration of the constitution of France by his measure of the provincial administrations, and the fault that was again committed by the king in suffering this minister, like his predecessor Turgot, to be overpowered by the court and privileged orders, and driven, in like manner, into retirement.

I concluded with giving a very unfavourable opinion of the parliaments. Whatever might be their former merits, I represented them as having acted at this period in a manner very unreasonable, perverse, and factious, highly unfavourable to the interests of their country.

I now proceed. When Necker was dismissed, the king took his next two financial ministers from the parliament, to lessen, perhaps, their opposition; but these ministers seem to have been wholly inefficient, though the return of peace gave them opportunities more favourable than any which Necker

had enjoyed. Regular magistrates, like these new ministers, and privileged bodies, like the parliaments they came from, have naturally, as Madame de Stael observes, a dread of innovations, and yet some change was surely to be attempted, when things, if left to themselves, were evidently journeying on to disorder and ruin.

This was probably in some way or other understood or felt by the court, for M. de Calonne was called to the administration of the finances, a man of brilliant talents, and probably in every respect the contrast of the worthy magistrates who had thus preceded him. You will see a great deal deserving of your attention on the subject of M. de Calonne, in the books I have referred you to.

You will find no difficulty, in the mean time, to conceive the situation of the king, the minister, and the kingdom.

The writings of the philosophers, the success of the American cause, and the disorder of the finances, the publications of Necker, the distresses of the state, every thing conspired to agitate the public mind; to lead men to find a pleasure in political speculations; to induce them to form extravagant expectations of the reforms that were to be introduced into France; of the wonders that were to be achieved by men of intelligence and patriotism; before the century yet closed, it seems to have been agreed that the last half of the eighteenth was to do more for mankind than all the ages that had preceded it.

It was certainly most unfortunate that a sentiment, a sort of enthusiasm like this, should have got possession of a nation like the French, capable, as a nation, of every thing and of any thing but calmness and sobriety of thinking; a virtue, this last, that is the safeguard of all the rest.

The manners and the talents of Calonne, you will see, as I have already mentioned, fully described in the works and histories I have referred to. Always agreeable and accommodating, he seemed to find no difficulties, and to make none. Did a courtier want a post? It was ready. Did the queen wish for a little place or pension for a favourite? It was ready also. The money was ready, in like manner, if a prince of the blood had a debt to discharge, contracted, perhaps, at a gaming house; the minister was always cheerful and at

leisure, and perfectly happy to listen to the wishes of every one.

But in the midst of this new era of felicity, this golden age, as it must have appeared to the courtiers and the court, the minister became sensible that the expenses of the state far exceeded the revenues, and the king found himself brought to the same point as before, that there could be for him and his kingdom no comfort and no security, unless the privileged orders could be induced to take their share of the general burden, and unless some provision that might really be effective could in this manner be made for the restoration of the finances.

Nothing can be more painful than to consider, in however brief and passing a manner, the situation of this unfortunate monarch, and this great kingdom, at this particular period. It was now the year 1785, two years after the peace. The parliament had registered the last loan not till after three remonstrances, after a formal protest, after being summoned to Versailles. The king very properly concluded, that when he was obliged to have recourse to force, he was losing the character of the father of his people. He was disquieted and unhappy; but if the parliaments were refractory, and if the privileged orders could not be managed, and if the middle classses of the community were becoming more intelligent, and if there was nothing around the monarch but dissatisfac tion and restlessness, and vague aspirations after some settlement and improvement, which he knew not how to procure, nor exactly to comprehend, what expedient was there left him, and what measure was he to adopt? He was too benevolent to join the courtiers, and by force and fury, banishing the parliaments, and trampling on all privileges of every kind, collect the revenue he wanted by the undisguised exertions of absolute power; nor was he of an understanding sufficiently decisive, enterprising, and elevated, to strike into some path of wisdom for himself, and, like a man of genius, control men, circumstances, and every thing around him, and convert them to his purposes. Unfortunately for himself, and indeed for his country, he had no pretensions of the kind. But we must return to the history.

His minister, M. de Calonne, had; and he therefore proposed

what he considered as a grand measure, and what he represented to the king as an infallible method of saving him from all new loans, all new imposts, and above all, from all further opposition from the parliaments.

The monarch could perceive that these were the great problems to be solved; and how was this to be effected? The answer was, by new management of the imposts, and by an abolition of those privileges which the timidity of the government (the minister observed) had allowed not only to the Pays d'Etat, but to the two orders, the most powerful of the kingdom—the nobility and the clergy. No doubt the king might have thought these two orders should on no account be exempted.

But what, then, was M. de Calonne's measure? He referred very properly to the history of the ancient practices and institutions of the country, the right point to turn to for any reformer; and he proposed to call together the assembly that had appeared in 1627—the assembly of the Notables; in other words, an assembly of the chief people of France; and for what purpose? To consider the whole of the case, and to give their advice; and what advice was expected? The only advice that was reasonable would have answered M. de Calonne, that all orders in the state should make common cause, and the privileged orders contribute; and then with the sanction of such advice, the king, it was intended, should afterwards proceed to carry the measure into execution, and make himself and his people happy. Such were the views of Calonne.

And were, then, the privileged orders themselves, who constituted the main body of this assembly, expected to *give* this advice, this disinterested patriotic advice; to forego their own privileges, and submit themselves to the taxgatherers? Now, if there was any one measure more to be avoided than another, it was a measure like this.

M. de Calonne had seen what had been the result of reviving the parliaments. What assistance had these bodies rendered to the king or his ministers, or M. de Calonne himself, in the settlement of the finances? And what material difference could be shewn between the parliaments and the notables? What folly greater than to call bodies of men together, to discuss things in general; men collected from all

quarters on a sudden (and, as it were, for the first time), to talk over the affairs of the nation; an ingenious expedient this for settling the disordered concerns of a great country! "But no," would have said the minister, "I had propositions to make, evils to state, remedies to propose."—But to whom? and when did a body of men act otherwise than with the spirit and prejudices of that body? Individuals may be disinterested, may be virtuous, may be wise, may rise superior to their temptations, but bodies of men never, if collected and addressed as a body; and no dream could be more shadowy than a delusion like this; more unworthy of the talents and situation of the minister, or even of the natural good sense of the king himself.

It is very true that Calonne could demonstrate the utility and reasonableness of his plans, to those who would listen to him; and on this he depended—a vain dependence, if the only dependence, as every one will find, who has to deal with bodies of men, or even individuals, and has points to obtain, and measures to carry.

> "On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
> Reason the card, but passion is the gale."

Calonne has published a work on the French Revolution—"De l'Etat de France présent et à venir." At the end of it he gives an outline of his plan; nothing can be more reasonable, and it remains an eternal indictment on the people of consequence then in France, more particularly on that part of them that composed the assembly of the Notables.

"What difficulties," he says in the close, "can be placed in the balance against such advantages; what pretexts can there be for any disquietudes on the subject?"

"More will be paid," he continues, "no doubt; but paid by whom? By those who now do not pay enough. They will hereafter pay every one in due proportion, and no one will be aggrieved.

"'But privileges will be sacrificed.'—Why, yes," he replies, "but then justice ordains and necessity requires it. Would it be better to overcharge those who are not privileged—the people? 'But there will be a great outcry raised.' This must be expected. Can one ever effect any general good without

running counter to particular interests? Can any one introduce reforms, and no complaint be heard?"

"The voice of patriotism," he goes on to say, "that attachment due to a sovereign, who concerts with his subjects the means of assuring the public tranquillity, the very sentiment of honour, a sentiment so powerful in the breast of Frenchmen, can one doubt a moment that considerations of this kind will not triumph over every other?"

In this manner did the minister express himself in March 1787. But alas! in his postscript in 1790—"Such," he says, "is the address that was considered as an incendiary production; not that the truth of its statements has been ever contradicted; it was discovered (it seems) that I had not spoken in terms sufficiently measured of the privileged orders, and to appease them I have been sacrificed." These are, as it were, the last words of Calonne.

Lacretelle, at the close of his seventeenth chapter, gives the reasonings that may probably have passed through the mind of the minister, and made a part of his conversation with his friends at the time. At the end of the chapter there is a list of the Notables, their division into seven chambers, and the names are given; princes of the blood, archbishops and bishops, marshals, counsellors of state and presidents of parliaments, prévôts and mayors; a selection from all the rank, official dignity, and talents of the kingdom.

Unfortunately for Calonne, the minister Vergennes died about a week before the opening of the assembly.

Opposition had been for some time preparing against him. Nothing could be more ingenious than his management of the assembly, as far as mechanical divisions went, for while it was only a minority of the whole body that favoured his projects, by breaking up the assembly into different chambers, and parcelling out his minority with skill, he had a majority of the chambers; but all was vain: the parliaments, the intriguing Bishop of Toulouse, the clergy, the people of consequence, even the queen were against him.

At last he seemed to have no friend, and he was actually obliged to fly. The same aristocracy and clergy that thus beat him off and banished him as a public enemy, and a sort of swindler, he lived to see flying, in like manner, for their

lives, from the senseless and unprincipled demagogues, the rulers that but too soon succeeded him, the popular, furious tyrants from whom the plans of Calonne gave the privileged orders their only chance of a timely escape.

"It is to Calonne," says M^e. de Stael, "that the revolution is to be imputed, if such an event can be attributed to any single individual. No doubt the minister was too sanguine, was too presumptuous; attended too little to the obvious principles of human nature; but to whom is the fault, is the guilt of this calamity to be attributed? To the minister who has depended too confidently on the disinterestedness, the sense of justice, the reasonableness of the privileged orders, or to those privileged orders themselves, who, in a great crisis of public affairs, have been wanting to their country in such necessary qualities?

You will see in the books I have referred to, Lacretelle, the Annual Register, &c., a very sufficient account of the proceedings that took place, the speeches of the king and the minister, and the views and movements of his opponents in and out of the assembly. Some circumstances were unfavourable to him; but I consider the whole as a memorable example to prove what I have announced to you—first, that no minister is to collect bodies of men together with no other dependence than the reasonableness of his own views, opposed to their natural prejudices and selfish interests; and secondly, that the adherence which bodies of men (I do not say individuals) show to their prejudices and selfish interests is always most infatuated and most blind, and in situations of a critical nature may be, and generally is, fatal to themselves and to their country.

But these observations, I must remind you, might be urged with much more reason in every period *preceding* the ministry of Calonne. Turgot and Necker were patriotic ministers, of virtuous and respectable character, the representatives of the king and the people. Calonne was of a different description, of licentious character, and the minister of the queen and the court. What might be properly conceded by the privileged orders to the former, might not be equally so to the latter; the privileged orders were to give up their exemptions from taxation, that is, to give up part of their property; but property is never given up, whatever may be the arguments of

the reasoner in the closet, without some very serious compensation, or the application of something like necessity and force.

Great want of magnanimity, of patriotism, of knowledge of human nature, was shown by the different parties on this occasion. The king and court, particularly the king, should have offered distinct and important ameliorations in the government, in lieu of the privileges to be conceded; and on the part of the privileged orders, if the concession of privileges was to be by them denied, it should have been denied, not, as it was, without any reason given, but because patriotic concessions on the part of the court and monarch were not at the same time proposed.

Still, and finally, after all the weight, that may be allowed to observations of this kind, the conduct of the privileged orders on this occasion must for ever be held up to mankind as an example of the selfish blindness of which all such orders are capable; they would not concede in time. Animated by no one generous or patriotic feeling that can be mentioned, they would not concede; and they, and every thing that they loved and honoured, were consequently buried in one common destruction—But they saw not their danger—let others, then, take warning.

The usual routine of the administration of public affairs in France had now been violated in vain; an assembly of Notables had appeared, and yet no great salutary effect had been produced.

This ought of itself to have been considered as a very serious calamity by the monarch, and all those who wished well to his authority.

The assembly and he parted in apparent good humour; every thing had seemed to go on smoothly when the minister was given up; they appear even to have assented to many of his proposals, and these proposals devolved as a sort of legacy upon his successor (his real, not his more immediate successor), the Bishop of Toulouse.

They were many of them of an important nature; the second of the six articles was the establishment of provincial assemblies for the equal collection of the imposts. To read the summary of the labours of the assembly, with which the

keeper of the seals, Lamoignon, put an end to their sittings, one should suppose that a new era was now to commence, that the most important improvements were to be realized, and every thing from this moment to be regularity, peace, and mutual satisfaction on the part of the king and his people; but by some strange fatality, some miserable want of capacity in the new ministry, some melancholy want of character, it must be confessed, in the king, no such happy alteration of circumstances in the affairs of this great country is seen to take place; and one more precious year, the most precious perhaps, and critical of all, is wretchedly thrown away and lost. The edicts to which the Notables had agreed are neither immediately brought to the parliament of Paris, nor acted upon without its authority, as having received the sanction of the Notables. Time is given to the parliament to recover, to their members to confer with each other, to speculate upon the interests of the kingdom, and in one way and another, even to unite the people against the crown, while they are thus maintaining the rights and interests not in truth of the people, but of the privileged orders. You will see in the Annual Register, far better than in Lacretelle, a detail of the contest that ensued between the parliament and the crown.

It is important; for it was during these twelve months (parts of the years 1786 and 1787), that reasonable efforts should have been made for the restoration of the finances and the happiness of the French people; but the parliaments did nothing; they entered into a contest with the crown, instead of making the best of what had been done and been proposed by the Notables. Observe what had been done, and recommended, and approved by that assembly, and you will then judge of the conduct of the parliament; for instance, many of the important proposals of Calonne had been sanctioned by this assembly of the Notables; they were the wish and desire of the king: the abolition of the corvée, the removal of the barriers between the different provinces, the abolition of internal taxes, duties and restrictions upon the transit of commodities from one to another, a decree for laying open and rendering free the commerce of grain throughout the kingdom, a decree for the relief of protestants, the abolition of the gabelle; all this was intended, and the king had pledged

himself to the last measure of the gabelle. The king's wish to promote the ease, content, and happiness of his people, was not a passion or secret disposition indulged only in speculation, it was embodied and brought fully into action, it was universally acknowledged.

Extraordinary adulations, continues the Annual Register, marked the speeches in the assembly of the Notables on the day of their rising. The mayor of Paris declared, that Louis XVI. would have been the exemplar and model on which Henry the Great would have formed himself, if the partial destiny of the present generation of Frenchmen had not reserved him to complete their happiness.

The Notables had indeed deserted Calonne and the king in the grand measure of all, the territorial revenue or land tax, which would have fallen upon the nobility and clergy, and thereby removed, so far as it went, those exemptions which had been so long considered as an intolerable grievance; here the patriotism of the assembly failed them, or they were awed by the potent bodies, the parliaments and privileged orders, whose interests, as well as their own, were concerned; still it is here to be observed, that the Notables were not totally wanting to their country—the people, according to the views and notions of the Notables, were evidently to be relieved from a number of the most crying grievances. The people had every rational ground to expect, that what was already done by the Notables was only introductory to a progressive course of measures for the melioration of the constitution and the improvement of all the departments of government, and nothing more was wanting, but an accommodating and conciliatory disposition in the parliament of Paris, by filling up the sketch traced out by the Notables, to have established eventually the prosperity of their country and even the permanent improvement of its constitution, or rather of its arbitrary monarchy.

For what was wanting to the community? Some power of criticism and control on the public expenditure; some public bodies of a representative nature. A power like this might have been generated by means of the provincial assemblies. These assemblies were themselves of a representative nature; they were the measures of Turgot and Necker, popular and

acknowledged patriots; they would have been a sacrifice on the part of the crown; it was fit that this sacrifice should have been answered by a corresponding one on the part of the privileged orders—an admission of the land tax.

What then could possibly be the meaning of the parliament and the privileged orders in thwarting every measure that the king could propose, in doing every thing to offend him, every thing to force him to a measure so unexampled and so perilous, as the call of the States General? You will see the detail of these strange transactions, these revived contests between the king and parliament of Paris, in Lacretelle and in the Annual Register. The Duke of Orleans, whose very name is infamy, is one of the heroes of these scenes, and D'Esprémesnil and others are united with him, whose names on the contrary are never mentioned but with honour.

At last you will see the parliament is animated with a spirit of opposition, so determined, with an enthusiasm so patriotic, that they even declare their own incompetency to legalize the imposts of the crown. The words "States General" are pronounced, and no other authority is proclaimed to be sufficient. And what then will become of us, (the parliament,) it was observed to D'Esprémesnil, when the States General appear. "The States General will be grateful to us," he replied, "for our magnanimity; and in the interval of their sittings they will continue to delegate to us their power." "Heaven will punish thee," replied one of his colleagues, "by listening to thy vows." This prediction was but too speedily and too fatally accomplished.

As I have already said, you may easily see in the Annual Register, the remonstrances of the parliament and the answers of the king. The language and the sentiments are sometimes of a querulous and wearisome, sometimes of an elevated and patriotic cast, and fitted to remind you of similar state papers that occur in the history of your own country, during the contest between Charles and his parliaments; but there is one important difference which you should never lose sight of; Charles was a prince who had ruled illegally and even tyrannically, who had for eleven years endeavoured to carry on his government without the

representative assemblies of the country; assemblies long established, and that were a regular part of the constitution of the government. In Louis, the parliaments and parliament of Paris and its patriots had to do with a benevolent monarch, who had no object so dear as the happiness of his people; to whose nature tyranny of every sort was abhorrent; who had the prejudices, no doubt, of his birth and situation, but who was only asking for measures that would have been of permanent improvement to the country; who would even have admitted changes that would have made the constitution of the country more free; who was indeed surrounded by a court and courtiers, that thought only of themselves, their privileges and enjoyments, but who was himself of all men the most removed, both as a king and as a man, from every thing that was selfish, unreasonable, or harsh.

The parliaments, instead of lecturing the king in the tedious, not to say disrespectful manner in which they did, on the virtue and necessity of economy, and on the faults of his ministers, that is, his own, would have done better to have schooled themselves and their privileged orders, on the duty of equal justice to the community,—to have reduced the difficulties of the case to some few and intelligible issues. On the part of the community they must have been aware that what was wanting, was, some constitutional power of criticising and controlling the expenses of the government, and on the part of the crown, some mode of providing for the disorders in the finances; that this was the whole that was to be accomplished, at least first and mainly to be accomplished; that the first might be accomplished eventually, and to all practical purposes, by a proper attention to the expedients proposed by Turgôt and Necker, by a proper modification of the provincial assemblies; and the latter, by a proper management of the privileges of the nobility and clergy; that these were the lines of direction which their patriotism and wisdom should have taken, and that by patience and proper management they had every thing to expect from the real interest which it was evident the king took in the happiness of his people; that the minds of men were obviously in a state of great ferment and agitation, and continually more and more turned to the discussion of political subjects; that

the crown had hitherto failed in every attempt to restore the finances, had even failed in the extraordinary measure of the assembly of the Notables, and that it was high time for the privileged orders and the monarch to proceed on a system of accommodation and peace, and of mutual sacrifice and attention to the interests and welfare at least, if not to the rights, of the whole community.

But all this, it would have been said by the leading men of the parliament, all this is what will be best effected, and can alone be effected, by the measure we have proposed, the only measure that can furnish a legal provision for the difficulties of the state, a call of the States General—a call of the States General! And what good had been produced, in fact, by a call of the Notables? What good to be produced by summoning large bodies of men, inexperienced in business and unused to the possession of power, to discuss public grievances? Would it not be wiser to let the States General hereafter arise out of the provincial assemblies, when the minds of men have been thus familiarized to the images of representative power, when men of intelligence and consequence in their different provinces have been accustomed to the duties and the temptations of an authority so important? But with how little effect would reasonings of this humble and moderate nature have been addressed to D'Esprémesnil, or l'Abbé Sabathier, or to Fretau, or Duport, or other active members of the parliament: or again, to the young, lively, ingenious, sanguine, theatric men of talents in the capital of Paris, or the great cities of the provinces. It was unhappily more agreeable to the feelings of such men and even of the parliament, and they considered it as far better wisdom, to say to their monarch in July 1787, "that they wished to see the whole nation assembled before they registered any new impost; that the nation alone thus assembled and instructed in the true state of the finances might extirpate the great abuses that are existing at present, and offer great resources to obviate them in future; that the monarch of France could never be so great as when surrounded by his happy subjects; that he had really nothing to fear but the excess of their attachment; that he had no other precaution to take but to be upon his guard against issuing orders that may be beyond their power to accomplish."

Such was the conduct and such was the parting language of the parliament in July 1787; and these are among the lessons of this great event, this revolution in France. Men are not to see, indifferent and unmoved, their country miserable; the people depressed; the privileged orders unjust and profligate and unfeeling; but they are not to let loose the community upon the existing rulers of it: they are to proceed step by step; they are not to depend upon vague, general, sanguine estimates, like those I have just quoted, but to be precise, cautious, and practical; above all, to fly from every thing that tends to revolution, because revolutions are not favourable to civil freedom. It is quite a mistake to suppose, as many noble minded and virtuous men do, and always have done, that revolutions are the proper remedies of national grievances; that they naturally lead to the establishment of the rights of mankind; nothing can be further from the fact: they break up society, and then the violent alone bear sway. If the country has before been free, all this may end ultimately in the revival and in some improvement of the former state of freedom, as was the case (but most fortunately the case) in our own country.

But it is only in cases of this kind that such salutary changes can be at all expected from revolutions. Even in such cases, civil freedom will best be gained or rather generated by the long continued exertions of wise and good men; by the dexterous management of times and circumstances; by doing anything rather than run into the extremes of violence and bloodshed. But will governors and governments, it will be replied, ever make any concessions, ever part with any power for the benefit of the people, unless they are terrified, unless they are compelled to do so? There is too much truth, I must allow, and it is mournful to me to acknowledge it, there is too much truth in this observation; and when it is added to the observations I have already made, the whole difficulty of the subject is then seen:—the merit of those patriots who are not only generous and gallant and noble-minded, but wise, that is, patient; the merit of those rulers who respect public opinion, and respect it in time.

In the instance before us, the instance of France, I must contend that the patriotic leaders in the parliaments had always before them the spectacle of a most benevolent mo-

narch, who, though affected by the prejudices of his birth, never ceased to mean well. I must indeed admit, that they had to do with a thoughtless, expensive court, with courtiers of very arbitrary principles, and with privileged orders, (they themselves most of them belonged to these privileged orders,) that were unjust and unfeeling; but at the head of them, I must again repeat, was a monarch unhappily not fitted to rule them, but a sensible, virtuous, religious man, from whom any thing and every thing might be expected, that his country could require, if but managed with proper forbearance and skill; if due advantage was made of his good qualities, and care taken not to give too much opportunity for the unhappy influence of his defects and failings.

But the words "States-General" had been pronounced—pronounced by the parliament itself. In France—in Paris—the mode is every thing. The idea of the States General became popular, became fashionable; every wise man and every foolish man had now got a resting place for his thoughts, and one at which his speculations could arrive with confidence, and in a moment; every one could see that something ought to be done, for neither people, king, court, nor privileged orders were at ease; and it was now evident forsooth to every the meanest capacity, that it was only necessary to assemble all the wisdom and consequence of the country together, to unite them to the benevolent wishes of the good king, and that *then*, to suppose any further doubt, or difficulty, or impediment remaining to the happiness of the country, to what was called "the regeneration of France," was perfectly ridiculous.

You will see in Lacretelle, and more particularly in the Annual Register, that a spirited and even able effort (though ill managed) was made by the king and Lamoignon to transact the business of the kingdom without the parliament of Paris, and probably to preclude the necessity of calling the States General. This was the institution of what was called the "Cour Plénière;" but the people of rank and consequence, both of the nobility and clergy, deserted their monarch (such is the term used by the writer in the Annual Register) on this critical occasion. The Dukes of Rochefoucault, De Noailles, Luxembourg, and several others, rejected the king's

nomination, and refused to sit in the Cour Plénière, this new assembly that was to supersede the parliament. The king was condemned, it is said by the same writer, to submit to this public insult, and to retract all he had done. Thus was the court sunk to the lowest ebb of degradation, while the parliaments were raised to the pinnacle of triumph and power.

I have in these few words given you the representation rather of the respectable writer in the Annual Register, Dr. Lawrence, than my own; for I must observe that it was a serious thing, and so it must have been thought by the dukes of Rochefoucault and Luxembourg, to sweep away the parliaments, and substitute in their room merely a Cour Plénière, whilst the nobles were so attached or even dependent on the court, and while the people were nothing, and certainly could find in this court no proper representative; finally, that the same Cour Plénière that might be valuable to the community under Louis XVI. might be only an instrument of tyranny under his successors. I do not, therefore, know how to blame these men of rank on this occasion; but what are we to say of the king and his advisers who were to commit themselves on a measure like this, without having first felt their way, or ascertained the opinions and intentions of such distinguished men as have just been mentioned?"

This measure, however, having failed, the king had no resource, for he was neither fierce nor arbitrary, and he therefore dismissed his minister, the cardinal De Brienne, from a post to which he ought never to have suffered him to be promoted. He recalled Necker, and the States General were promised for the May of the ensuing year.

I will now proceed to give you, before I conclude my lecture, some general notion of what was thought of the situation of France by different observers at this particular period. I do not necessarily adopt or require you to subscribe to any sentiment that I shall thus exhibit before you; my meaning is, to put you in possession, as well as I can, of the whole of the case, to give you an interest in the scene, by enabling you the better to understand its bearings and its circumstances, its unhappy difficulties and various perils. I will first refer you to the representations of the Baron de

Grimm, an eyewitness at the time. He is writing at the very period now before us.

"Never was there a minister," says he, "who showed such talents for throwing every thing into confusion, as M. de Brienne (the cardinal). He has shaken to pieces the whole political machine in the space of a few months; thanks to the happy ascendant of his genius, one may truly say, that there is not a single public body in France that remains in its place, or retains its natural movements. The parliament has on a sudden adopted a system the most directly opposed to its own interests, one that it has anathematized a hundred and a hundred times; the nobility, the existence of which seems the most intimately connected with the rights of the throne, has an air of being disposed to separate itself. Even the military spirit seems overpowered by some spirit, I know not what, of patriotism, laudable in itself perhaps, but rather difficult to reconcile with that character of subordination, without which there can be neither discipline nor army; the clergy no longer preach obedience, the soldiers seem no longer disposed to maintain it. What is still more remarkable is, that this universal discontent has been preceded by declarations from the king the most favourable to public liberty. He has just been making more sacrifices of his authority than any of his predecessors have ever ventured to do. The parliaments have called aloud for the assistance of that which of all other things they had most to fear, a meeting of the States General, carried away by a man totally without consideration among them, an Abbé de Sabathier; all, as if actuated by some supernatural influence, have demanded the convocation of the States General; making as it were in this manner the amende honorable to the nation for having so long usurped the most capital of its rights."

"It was under these desperate circumstances," says the Baron de Grimm, "that Necker was recalled."

Such was the general notion formed at the time of the situation of France by the Baron de Grimm, an agent of an arbitrary court (of Prussia), but a man of a very experienced, improved, and penetrating mind.

I will next refer you to the views that were formed at the time by men of the old régime in France itself. I will allude

to the Memoirs of the Marquis de Bouillé. He was the very humane and respectable man who commanded the French forces in the West Indies during the great American war, and so conducted himself, that on his visiting England a public dinner was given to him by the planters and the West India merchants; and he was every where received, at court and by the public, in the most flattering manner. The opinions and feelings of a man like this (you must, as you read the history, always refer to this memoir) are on every occasion entitled to our consideration.

After some observations, he goes on to say—"The French nation, in the corrupt state to which it had arrived, could no longer be governed but by a firm and severe government, by a sceptre like that of Louis XIV.; and this was too weighty for the hands of Louis XVI. His aged counsellor recommended mildness instead of severity, and the king was easily made to believe that the love of his people ought to be preferred to their fear." Here you see the soldier, the veteran general, the man accustomed to the exercise of regular authority, and who depends upon authority alone. He afterwards admits, that the most numerous and most useful class of the king's subjects, the labouring poor, were at that time harassed and rendered unhappy by the avarice and rapacity, not only of the courtiers, but of an immense crowd, some of whom by intrigue, others sheltering themselves beneath the privileges of their order or situation, threw the whole weight of the public burden upon the inferior ranks of society. He continues thus:—"His majesty suffered himself to be persuaded, and his ministers persuaded themselves, that the enlightened (he must now mean to speak of the patrons of the new opinions), but at the same time restless, jealous, insatiable, and corrupt description of men, who inhabited the court, the capital, and the great cities, composed the mass of the people. These, however, in reality, formed a very small part of the nation, and that, the most depraved in its morals and the most dangerous from the turbulent spirit with which it was agitated. Thenceforth the opinion of this part of the public became the uncertain guide of government." The marquis (I say) must here refer to those who had become imbued with the new opinions; he probably quite under-

estimated their number and importance, and even their respectability. He goes on to refer every measure of the king, ministers, and court, to their wish to propitiate this public opinion; the recall of the parliaments, the exhausting of the treasury, the dismissal of the officers and attendants of the monarch, the assistance given to America; "in fine," says he, "so totally was every principle of policy and of morality disregarded, that the public mind was already democratical, while the monarchy still existed; the Notables could do no service, nor could the States General; the magistracy was ambitious, the clergy jealous of their privileges, a spirit of innovation prevailed among the nobility, whilst there was a total want of subordination in the army, particularly among the chiefs; licentiousness and insolence pervaded the middle ranks of society, whilst the lower class experienced the extreme of misery, and the rich indulged themselves in the most unbounded luxury."

This is a fearful picture, and the marquis does not attempt to offer any remedy for these calamities of the state. An assertion, however, of the rights of the old monarchy, of the old régime, authority, force, a trial of the bayonet, would have been probably his advice, his only resource; no composition, no conciliation, no terms to be kept with the new opinions, no escape from them, resistance to the utmost, war; at least such would have been his counsels certainly at any time after the formation of the constituent assembly, and probably at the period we are now alluding to, the year 1788. Such are the men and such the opinions that must be considered as existing at the time, and as forming, I must repeat, a part of the case.

For another specimen of this kind we may turn to the annals of Bertrand de Moleville, another respectable supporter of the old régime. I will allude to them for a moment, and conclude. Speaking of this period, he says—"With these important sacrifices made by the princes of the blood and the nobility, the Tiers Etat ought to have been satisfied, and grateful for them; but they were sometimes represented as acts of hypocrisy, which ought not to be relied on; sometimes as indications of fear, which should encourage that order to rise in their demands. By such perfidious insinua-

tions the factious kept alive the distrust and agitation of the people, and disposed them to revolt. The most inflammatory pamphlets against the clergy and the nobility were circulated through the whole kingdom without the least opposition; the most shameful caricatures, exposed to view in the squares, on the quays, and at the print shops in Paris, excited the crowds they collected to insult not only the ecclesiastics, but every well-dressed man who happened to be passing.

"The letters for convoking the States General," he goes on to say, "were issued at this crisis. The affectionate and truly paternal sentiments expressed in them by the king ought to have allayed all discontent, and dissipated all uneasiness; and no doubt they did produce that effect among the reasonable, honest, and well-affected persons of the three orders; but the turbulent and ambitious, the intriguing and the revolutionary fanatics, did not relax the least on that account in the project for overturning every thing, but continued preparing the means for carrying it into execution."

Such were the views of Bertrand de Moleville, of the Marquis de Bouillé, and the Baron de Grimm: represent now to your minds, as well as you can, the fermentation that had long existed in the minds of the people of France, and particularly of Paris; consider what the court and government had been, and what the new opinions were, the opportunity that now appeared to offer itself for what was called the regeneration of France, and combining thus the effect of the old and new opinions, together with the particular circumstances of the monarchy, you will be able to form some general notion, such at least as can now be formed, at this happy distance of time and place, of the state of this distracted kingdom, when Necker was recalled to undertake once more the office from which he had been a few years before most unfortunately and improperly dismissed.

# LECTURE VII.

## NECKER.

IN my last lecture I adverted to the administration of M. De Calonne.

I described his efforts to restore the finances by a call of the Notables. This was his expedient for procuring assistance from the privileged orders. He had hoped that these privileged orders might be induced, by the advice and authority of the Notables, to pay their share of the public burdens; but this advice the Notables would not give. They attended to his recommendations, but with this most important exception.

He had been too sanguine, was disappointed, and obliged to fly the country.

Even the measures which the Notables did approve and recommended were not carried into execution, though they would have been highly beneficial to France, and might have somewhat allayed the storm.

I then alluded to the conduct of the parliament, who crowned what has always appeared to me their prior very unreasonable conduct, by calling for the States General.

I quoted a paragraph from the Baron de Grimm, giving his opinion of the situation of the kingdom, and of the injudicious administration of the Cardinal de Brienne.

I gave two quotations, one from M. de Bouillé, and one from M. de Moleville, to exhibit to you what were the sentiments of the patrons of the old régime, and then, reminding you of what were in the mean time the disorder and confusion of opinions and interests every where prevailing, I concluded by stating that the meeting of the States General had been promised by the king, and that in this crisis of the state Necker was recalled.

My present lecture must be devoted to his administration;

but I must first say a word of the Cardinal de Brienne. This predecessor of Necker, the archbishop of Sens, was a man of family, fortune, and influence, with all the penetration of an experienced courtier, and great talents for intrigue. Owing to these circumstances, and his having taken a lead in the opposition to Calonne, he acquired the great object of his ambition, the post of prime minister; but it was a post of which he was not at any period worthy, and one for which he was peculiarly unfit at the particular period before us. His administration, as you have already been given to understand by the Baron de Grimm, was full of mistakes and inconsistencies; at a time, too, when they could not but be fatal to the king he served. The last fault that it was in his power to commit, he seems to have taken care to commit as he was going out of office: the States General were promised, and he actually invited all the writers and philosophers in France, in the king's name, to give their opinions on the proper mode of assembling them!

It must be confessed, therefore, that Necker returned to power, in August 1788, under very unfavourable circumstances; the critical year and a half of the archbishop's administration was for ever lost; and the time that might have been employed by a popular minister in saving the monarchy from a revolution, had been only used in making a revolution inevitable.

The loss of these fifteen months was deeply lamented by M. Necker, and he considers himself as having been called for too late. This lamentation of M. Necker is ridiculed by M. de Bailleul, a democratic writer, the declared opponent of the work of M^e^. de Stael, over the pages of which he hopes to pass, like a pestilential blast over a fair country, withering its fruits and flowers as he goes along. He is a very odious, though an able writer; and thus to ridicule the natural sentiment of M. Necker, is to suppose that things are to be left to take their course, that evils cannot be prevented, and that it is of no consequence to a country, in very critical times, whether its counsels are guided by men of conciliatory dispositions and intelligent minds, or the contrary; and it is in this strain that M. de Bailleul proceeds all through his work, as do indeed the French historians Mignet and Thiers.

When, however, M. Necker came into administration, he appears to have himself committed all the faults that now remained possible; to have been quite overpowered by the force of public opinion; to have had no object but to ascertain it, and then no plan but to submit to it. Woe to the country, where ministers do not respect public opinion; but woe equally to the land, to the monarchy at least, whether absolute or mixed, where the minister has no other master! As if to rival the incapable measure of his predecessor, M. Necker in the first place, thought proper to summon the Notables once more together, to deliberate, forsooth, as the States General were to be now called,—1st, how they were to be composed; 2dly, the form of convocation; 3dly, the order of the elections; 4thly, the manner in which were to be held the different assemblies, which were to give instructions to their deputies to the states. As if the royal authority had not been already sufficiently degraded and damaged by the irrational conduct of his predecessor, he must now proceed to abandon in this manner to the result of a public discussion, to surrender up to others, formally, voluntarily, and without the slightest apparent utility, the regulation of all those important points, which it was the natural office of the king to adjust and decide himself. M. Necker may speak, as he pleases, of the force of public opinion, as may his daughter, M^e^. de Stael; but the minister was unfit for his situation, at this extraordinary juncture, who saw not that every thing had turned against the crown; who saw not, that what authority was still left it, must be turned to every purpose of its protection and illustration of its dignity, and must, as much as possible, be produced and exercised, that it might not expire and appear voted out of the world by common consent. What I now say of this measure of calling the Notables together, for the purpose of consulting them, is still more to be applied to the measures which he subsequently adopted. The Notables, on this second occasion, seem to have been somewhat more aware of their danger, than they were when called together by Calonne. They were composed, as before, chiefly of the privileged orders; and, with the exception of one bureau, where, singularly enough, his present majesty of France, Louis XVIII. then the king's brother, presided, the six were

chiefly of opinion that the number of the Tiers Etat in the ensuing assembly should *not* equal the joint numbers of the two other orders, the clergy and the nobility. This was evidently the great question of all. On one side, that is, against it, were this decided majority of the Notables, a great part of the clergy and nobility, the noblesse of Britany, and the magistrates. This opinion (against the double representation) was likewise fortified by the inference to be drawn from the example of the states of Britany, Burgundy, and Artois, and by the support of most of the princes of the blood.

On the other side were ranged (that is, in favour of the double representation) this small minority of the notables, the three orders of Dauphiny, the bureaux of the provincial assemblies, supported by the inference to be drawn from the ancient constitution of the states of Languedoc, and the formation of the recent estates of Provence and Hainault, the opinion of the publicists, of the parliament of Paris, of the towns and commons of the realm, and public opinion in general. Such was the state of things in December 1788, and at the end of the month the ordinance or declaration of the king appeared, determining that the number of the deputies should be one thousand, be formed on a basis of population and taxation, and that the number of the Tiers Etat should equal that of the other two orders united.

This was in December 1788. A month after, in January 1789, the Marquis de Bouillé mentions that he had a conversation with Necker. "I represented to him with force and with truth the danger of assembling the States General in the manner he intended. I told him that he was arming the people against the first orders of the state, and that when thus delivered up unarmed, they would soon feel the effect of their vengeance, urged on by the two most active passions of the human heart, interest and self-love. I entered into particulars, but he coldly answered me, raising his eyes to heaven, that it was necessary to rely on the moral virtues of mankind. I replied that this was a fine romance, but he would see a horrible and bloody tragedy, of which I advised him to avoid the catastrophe. At this he smiled, and M^e^. Necker told me that my apprehensions were extravagant."

I must enter a little more into the particulars of the conduct of the minister at this critical period of the Revolution.

It would have been very difficult for M. Necker to have recovered the false step he had made in consulting the Notables, in calling upon them to decide questions which the king should have himself decided in virtue of his own prerogative and as a matter of course.

The mind of the public had been thrown into a high state of fermentation before the close of the year 1788, when this second assembly of the Notables broke up. The current had begun to set strongly in favour of new opinions; still it is understood that the monarch was respected, his authority, as such, had never been called in question, and they who speculate upon this great subject of the French Revolution, who can extend their sympathy to every class and description of men in society, to the high as well as the low, and who shrink with a just terror from any counsels or opinions that are likely to lead to scenes of confusion and bloodshed, all such humane and reasonable philosophers have never ceased to accuse Necker of a great want of political courage on this most momentous occasion. They consider him as waiting to be directed by the public opinion, instead of taking his ground early, and directing it where to flow, and within what bounds to confine itself. Every credit is given him for his intentions and his integrity, that he meant to give security to the crown, yet civil liberty to the country; properly to limit the powers of the monarch, but of the people also; that he had no selfish views, and sought neither rank nor riches, nor any reward but that of honest fame and the consciousness of doing good to others; still they consider him as accommodating himself to the new opinions, at this particular crisis, in a manner that proved in the event quite calamitous to the country, and fatal to every object that could have animated his benevolence or rewarded his ambition.

The two great points which should have been settled as of course by Necker, and should have appeared in the king's declaration, were, 1st, whether the number of the Tiers Etat should equal the numbers of the two other orders conjointly; 2dly, whether these orders were to vote in different houses or

in one, to be three assemblies or one, to vote by orders or by head.

You will easily see the importance of these points and the direction which the new and old opinions naturally took. What chance for the Tiers Etat, if each of the other two privileged orders was to have a negative on their measures? What chance on the other side for the king or for those very orders, if all were to be assembled together, and every thing to be decided by a majority of the whole? More particularly if the numbers of the Tiers Etat were to be equal to the numbers of the other two conjointly.

When points of this nature were thrown among the public for discussion in the improvident manner they were, by the prior minister, the Archbishop of Sens, and even afterwards by Necker himself, the fermentation that would be occasioned in such a place as Paris, in such a country as France, at such a period as the close of the year 1788, cannot possibly be conceived.

M^e^. de Stael is obliged to allow her father's mistake in calling this second assembly of the Notables; she is willing to defend him in every subsequent measure. But he has defended himself very ably, very anxiously, and at considerable length. I have already referred you to his book on the French Revolution, and I have also mentioned to you his work on his own administration, printed in 1791, which is very interesting. The subject matter, with which we are now concerned, was then fresh in his memory. He was a philosopher, a patriot, and an actor in the scene. He has on every account a perfect right to be heard.

I must remind you, as I have never ceased to remind you, that it is when you are employed in considering points of this nature, that you are best employed. It is here that you are to meet your lessons of instruction, that you are to learn how you are to manage the affairs of mankind. You are to find the greatest interest in those points where a common reader finds the least. The questions before you are of the following nature: Could Necker have prevented the revolution and yet have allowed France to attain a rational system of liberty? or rather, perhaps, an intermediate situation that would necessarily have led to one? Did he make mistakes? Were

they important? Such are the questions you are to consider. I mean in the remainder of this lecture to occupy you with the conduct of M. Necker. I shall do little more than make quotations from his later work on the revolution, and this may not be very interesting to you, unless you consider attentively the nature of the subject before you.

You who have not exactly lived during the times of the French revolution, cannot at all imagine how long and how deeply it affected the thoughts, the feelings, and the interests of every human being, without any exception, that then existed in the civilized world; the lives, the properties, the affections, the daily anxieties of millions—but you must endeavour to conceive it; and I cannot but believe, that with a little reflection, you will be able to do so to a considerable degree; to a degree sufficient, at least, to enable you to listen to the detail of what passed in the mind of one of the most important actors in the scene, M. Necker, at a moment when the business of the scene was of the most critical nature.

Recollect what has been already intimated to you; the manner in which the affairs of the kingdom have been now for some time journeying on to a state of the greatest difficulty and danger; figure to yourselves the court and the patrons of the old régime on the one side, the patriots and the patrons of the new opinions on the other; the king and his minister, Necker, between the two; the convocation of an assembly promised that was to be the image of the whole nation, the assembly consisting of three orders; of two that would be naturally leagued with the old opinions; of one that would be as naturally animated with all the ardour and enthusiasm of the new; and the questions to be determined then are, whether the popular part was to equal in number the other two, and whether the three orders were to meet in three houses or in one; that is, as you will easily see, whether the new opinions were entirely to bear sway or not. This consequence, at least, was pretty evident even then; but to us who live after the events, it is difficult to say, what consequences, and what calamitous consequences, may not be traced up to the manner in which, on whatever account, these great questions were now determined; and as this determination seems to be the hinge on which the revolution

may be said to have turned, you can surely think no time lost that is employed in considering what were the views of M. Necker, by what circumstances he was surrounded, if misled and mistaken, how and why; and whether any instruction can be derived for ourselves from the conduct of all parties on this occasion, the minister and those whom he undoubtedly wished to serve. You will observe then, with respect to Necker and his book, that nothing can be more reasonable or manly, than all his preliminary observations and admissions. He seeks not to withdraw himself from responsibility in any part of the discussion. Add to this, he affirms, and no doubt with perfect truth, that he never ceased to speak to the king of the wants and unhappy situation of his people; nor to the people of the virtues and benevolent intentions of the king; that it was the object of all his efforts to defend the monarchy without concealing from the monarch how useful it was, to have the constitution of a government properly balanced; and at every turn and on every occasion through the whole of his administration, he insists, to use his own words, that so far from accelerating, as has been supposed by his accusers, the descent of a car that was already running down with such velocity, he did every thing he could to stop the wheels of it, and never ceased, while by the side of it, to call aloud for help.

In the first place, he says that the States General were promised before he returned to power. He shows very satisfactorily that it was then totally impossible to prevent their assembling; that this fault, at least, he did not commit. "I must declare too," he says, "to the honour of the prince, that he never for a moment made it a question, whether he was to keep an engagement so distinctly entered into."

"Great changes are always so hazardous," he says, "that had not the States been promised, I should have made every possible effort to *serve* France by means of the provincial assemblies, and yet *save* her from disturbance and convulsion; and why should I disguise the truth? Like the nation, I was full of hope—hope that I then could not suppose vain—Alas! how can one now think, without tears, on the hopes and expectations then everywhere felt by all good Frenchmen, by every friend of humanity?" He then goes on to describe how

the new opinions were brought to bear in the most unfortunate manner, on every existing principle, and institution, and usage in the state; on the confused and contradictory nature of the different powers existing in the constitution; how easy were the improvements, it was thought, that must result from the assembling of the representatives of the nation; how beneficial and how certain, as it was supposed, the regeneration of the whole system: and he thus arrives at the consideration of his own particular case.

The States General, he says, were promised, no doubt; nothing more; but the same public opinion, he observes, that had extorted from the king this meeting of the States General, was sure to have its influence on their formation. M. De Brienne, his predecessor, he says, requested opinions on the subject from the municipalities, the provincial administrations, and even the academies and the men of letters; and the nation, even if before not disposed to rest much on the authority of its own opinion, was thus taught to refer to it from the very doubts and apparent uncertainty of government itself.

He perceived, he says, that the nation looked forward to the States General not as a mere ceremony and spectacle. He then shows that the forms and proceedings in the year 1614, to which the parliaments had referred, could have afforded no proper precedent for the assembly that was to be summoned in 1789; and that it was so necessary that the States should not only be called, but called in some form and manner that would be agreeable to the ideas of the public, that, he says, his proposition of consulting the Notables was considered as a fortunate expedient, as a sort of lucky thought to have occurred to him. The labours of the Notables he holds to have been eminently useful, and he considers them as settling many things of an uncertain, yet important nature, that could not have been well settled by the king's council on their own authority.

This is a striking difference from the opinion of Necker's critics, who conceive that the king in council should have settled every thing, and even from M^e^. De Stael, who does not defend this consulting of the Notables.

These Notables were divided into six bureaux, of twenty-

four each, princes of the blood, archbishops, &c. One of the most important questions of the whole subject, the number of the deputies to the States General, they did not touch upon; and on the still more important question, the relative numbers of the orders, the bureau in which Monsieur presided, determined that the number of the Tiers Etats should be double that of either of the other two orders; but not so the other five bureaux. Necker ultimately decided for the double representation. How came then Necker, after calling the Notables and asking their advice, not to take it, when it now appears it was most important to have followed it?

You will see his reasons—that is, his defence against the serious accusations that were brought against him. On the whole they seem to resolve themselves into the following propositions:

That if the ancient formulary of the convocation of the States had been adhered to, such a liberty would have been allowed, that the number of deputies returned by the Tiers Etat under the existing circumstances of political fermentation and enthusiasm, would have turned out to be far more than double that of the other two; that the writs that must have been made use of by the crown, would have admitted an almost indefinite latitude of election: this may be, and is a sufficient answer to those who would have had the election form of 1614 adhered to. But again—that if the king and council were obliged to take upon themselves to fix the relative numbers of the orders, they were in truth obliged also to conform themselves to the public wishes. They were under a strict moral necessity to do so; they could not venture to do otherwise. And their only part to take was to be content with the double representation, and to proclaim this as their measure as soon as possible, that the king might have the credit of a popular measure, and the state escape the confusion that would have resulted, if the council had left the point undetermined by repeating the ancient forms of convocation.

But this is for Necker to say, in other words, that he durst not oppose the public opinion.

Reasoners on the case now will think, on the contrary, that he ought, and that he might and ought, in the king's decla-

ration to have settled this point, and the second point also, of their mode of voting, which we have mentioned, in favour of the crown, but he settled neither the one nor the other. He announced in the king's declaration that the number of the Tiers Etat should be double. He said nothing of the manner in which they were to vote—in three houses or one; and this point was to be determined by the states when they met; and, as the number given to the Tiers Etat was double, it could not but be determined like the other, sooner or later, against the crown. We must, however, again hear his defence. When I refer to it, I must observe that it is quite impossible for me, on this occasion, to impress upon your minds the full weight of his arguments. He is a very good writer, and gives his reasonings, which are always respectable, every advantage of style and manner. You must read this part of his work very attentively; you will then see that I could not possibly be so unjust as to leave his case entirely to depend upon any imperfect description or unworthy abridgement of his book, which I could myself make, and that I have necessarily referred you to the work itself. It is moreover, a very critical part of the whole subject; and one, which I conceive you cannot be better occupied, than by studying thoroughly. To make a revolution may be easy; to prevent one, and yet not be wanting to the great cause of liberty, is indeed a labour worthy the ambition of the highest faculties, and necessarily implying the exercise of the greatest virtues; and this is the subject before you.

Some general notion of M. Necker's views I can give you, but some general notion only; but before I give them you will observe that I consider them as reasons not sufficient to justify him in the conduct he pursued, but rather as fitted to show that he should have done what he did not do; what we have already mentioned, that he should have done; that is, decided every thing in the king's declaration, on the king's own authority. In his work on the French Revolution, to which I am all along referring, you will see him exhibit the difficulties of the case. They were very great. You will then see, that in the event, and after the states had met, he was at last obliged to propose a system of conciliation and accommodation to all the parties, as a remedy for all these difficul-

ties. Now, it would have been better, or rather, perhaps, it would have been the only chance to have made this system, which he had afterwards to *propose*, his measure from the first, and to have announced it as the king's will in the declaration, in the instrument, by which the king did the public the favour of calling the states together at all. M. Necker's representations are of the following nature: A long interval, he observes, had elapsed since the last assembly of the States; and, from being veiled in a distant obscurity, they were embellished by all the colours of the imagination. Almost all the former assemblies had been convoked for the mere will and purposes of the crown; an ephemeral senate, which the sovereign could dissolve at pleasure. Subsidies were demanded, and grievances brought forward, which might or might not be afterwards attended to.

But times of this nature were passed, says M. Necker. Louis XVI. had scarcely ten millions of feudal revenue, and it was for the entire sum of the public expenses, of the whole interest to be provided for an immense debt, that he found himself under the necessity of having recourse to the States; a necessity imposed upon him, not only by a resolution of the sovereign courts, but even by the parliament of Paris, which declared itself incompetent legally to register either impost or loan any longer.

What power, what authority would not naturally be obtained, says M. Necker, by the deputies of the Tiers Etat, the representatives of those who had chiefly to contribute, while they were called to deliberate upon all the conditions and all the reasons for which they were to make an annual sacrifice of five hundred millions.

The clergy of France, he says, were at one time so situated, that superstition combined with religion to elevate and sustain their supremacy. The nobility were *once* aided by all the consideration with which the feudal system had environed them. But these two orders, even in all the splendour of their former greatness, if they had been called to deliberate with the Tiers Etat on the form and mode of collecting an immense contribution of this kind, would have found it quite impossible to maintain their ascendant; but what hope for them, when the relative importance of the two orders, and of

the third, had actually changed situations, and been transferred from the one to the other. But, here it may be replied to M. Necker, if this was the case, as it certainly was, ought not M. Necker to have foreseen what must be the event, if the question of voting or any other material question was left to be decided by the States, when met together? Was he not to have tried to anticipate their decision by one from the king? Commerce alone, he continues, among other things, had entirely changed the solid importance of the Tiers Etat in the social system. It was to their talents and industry that the existence of national wealth was owing; that is, the existence, as every day more and more proclaimed, of national power. Education, admission to offices in the provincial assemblies, a thousand causes had placed their intelligence and their knowledge in a rapid state of progress and improvement. There was little resemblance between the Tiers Etat of 1789 and those of former periods. Once more, too, with regard to the other orders, M. Necker goes on to say, the prelates and clergy naturally owed their influence in the first place to the general respect that prevailed for religion itself; but this had unhappily been weakened. Other causes had conspired to diminish their authority.

Every thing contributed to engage them to support the royal authority, but it was no longer in their power to afford it any material assistance by their influence over the Tiers Etat and the nation.

The nobility too, many circumstances (you will see them mentioned by Necker), had contributed, he says, to rob, of all its constitutional dignity and lustre, in the eyes of the nation. There were those among them, no doubt, of historic name; but the greater part consisted of those who had been ennobled only in more modern times by the crown. The whole composition of the body was altered, the most ancient and most honourable of distinctions had been made a subject of traffic; each sort of nobility had equally a right to vote; at least one-half the order consisted of families ennobled within the last two centuries. This disposition of things might do very well for Louis XIV.; he had various court contrivances of ceremony, indulgence, and decoration, by which he kept the two sorts of nobility distinguished from each other: Louis XV. in like

manner: but all this was in vain when the whole body was to rally round the throne, and affect, by its political consideration, the Tiers Etat, and the nation.

"What a subject here for reflection," says Necker, "this relative importance of the Tiers Etat and the other two orders, to suppose that it could be balanced by any contrivance of the respective numbers of the two orders!" But to this it may be surely answered, that to suppose that there was no contrivance by which it could be balanced, and no preparatory measures to be adopted, is to surrender at discretion; to give up the cause of the crown (that is, the cause of peaceful or temperate improvement) at once. It is in vain to dissemble, he continues, that the power of the crown had attained its height in the best days of Louis XIV., and had from that period declined. Louis XV. himself, perhaps, had indulged but too imprudently, in a taste for popularity, Louis XVI. and the queen, their love of the ease and the comforts of a private station. The personal dignity of a crowned head can never equal the conventional grandeur of a monarch.

These are not trifling considerations, he says; the conduct of the court was affected by the examples of the king and queen, and the manners were changing. Great effects are produced by the union of an infinity of small causes.

A strange situation of things, says Necker: it might well be doubted, whether even the re-establishment of the States themselves could sufficiently provide for it. He then mentions a notion entertained by himself and others at the time, that all would have been well if something like the constitution of England could have been proposed and accepted. Was it unnatural for a statesman, he says, to cast his eyes on the constitution of England? The order of nobility in France, mixed as it was, could no longer discharge its office in the political system; but a House of Peers like the English might.

There were difficulties, he continues, as France then stood, with regard to the contributions of the Tiers Etat; but there was an end of them, by supposing the people of property (the Peers excepted) represented in a House of Commons, as in England. It was necessary that something should be done for France immediately; but what could be expected from the

discordant views and mutual disgusts of a legislature divided into three orders? Not so, if divided only into two, as in England. "And why again should I dissemble," says Necker, "that both my first and my last thoughts have leaned in favour of a system of government like that of England, with which neither states in three orders, nor any form of monarchy, can be put in comparison.

"The king, unfortunately for any views I might have entertained of this kind, had a prejudice against whatever might resemble the usages and institutions of England. His opinion afterwards altered, but it was then too late."

At the time that the Cour Plénière was attempted by the Archbishop of Sens, a Chamber of Peers and a House of Representatives would have been received from the king with acclamations; but it is vain to regret, says Necker, thoughts of foresight, of prevention—the generality of people have nothing to say to them; the tocsin of events must sound before they can be awakened or instructed.

There was nothing for it then, concludes Necker, but to embark upon this sea of troubles; to take the chances of these states, thus called, and their three orders; a scene of rivalry that the dispositions of men had made so dangerous. An exact line of conduct it was not possible to trace; it was evident, however, that the two orders could not sufficiently support the crown; that the crown must get assistance from public opinion; that great address would be necessary to manage the general movement in the public mind; that the love of the people was to be sought to regain for the king what royalty had on various accounts lost.

These are the representations of Necker, written in 1795, and after the events.

Now, surely, under the circumstances thus described, it was not the best chance, (and that is the turn of the whole question,) it was not *the best* chance, as he seems to take for granted, to let things take their course; to let the different orders meet, and abide by the result. This was not the best chance. This result could not possibly, even under his own view of the case, be favourable to the crown. Surely any other chance would have been more promising. Such, however, was the part taken; the consequence was, what appears

to us now, a consequence, from the first, inevitable. A dispute immediately arose. The Tiers Etat insisted that the whole should form *one* assembly; that the different orders should deliberate and vote in common; while the nobility and clergy insisted that the orders should all vote separately, and in their own houses. The public of course took the part of the Tiers Etat. Some of the members of the two privileged orders wavered and went over, and the monarch was at last obliged to interpose his authority and invite the whole into one great assembly, for the sake of the general tranquillity, and for the sake of retaining for himself some share of the public affection and respect.

The public, says M. Necker, took part with the Tiers Etat. The whole meeting of the states, it was conceived by them, would have become a mere pageant, unless the orders were united and voted in common. It was thus that the deputies, it was every where observed, did business together in the provincial assemblies with perfect harmony and success. Why not in the States General? The deputies from Dauphiny appeared in the assembly so united, as of course, and the place resounded with applauses.

The nation had expected, says Necker, every thing from their deputies; they had ordered them to settle the constitution before they granted the supplies. The most difficult of enterprises was thus to be attempted before the most urgent of necessities was to be provided for. In the mean time government itself could not be at ease if nothing was done. The exigencies of its situation were most pressing.

Some have held, continues Necker, that the king should have opposed himself, before the meeting, to any deliberation in common, and should have decided for the nobility and clergy at once. Some, on the contrary, that he should have ordered the union of the orders—certainly they have supposed the first, and with great reason. All, alas, he says, was impossible. Supposing the nobility and clergy disposed to unite with the Tiers Etat, the king had no right to prevent them, nor was it in his power. He might indeed have ordered them to *unite*, for *there* the public would have been with him; but why was he to take away that merit from the two orders?

Surely this is but loose reasoning in M. Necker. It is to

suppose that the minister and the king had only to consider what would be the wish of the popular party.

On the whole, then, we hold, that M. Necker made a mistake in not having taken the best chance which the case afforded, that of settling these disputable points in favour of the crown, by the king's own authority, in the king's declaration.

But one word more from M. Necker. He conceives that the two privileged orders were in fault on the first meeting of the States. These two orders, continues Necker, I must for ever reproach, bitterly reproach, for not having seen the course which reason, policy, and, above all perhaps, a just estimation of the necessity of their situation, prescribed to them. Necker seems to have wished that the two orders should immediately and without making any further difficulties, have *united* with the Tiers Etat. Had they but taken, he continues, the direction which government recommended to them, all would have been well; the minds of men would have been settled, and we should not have seen what we have seen. The two superior orders could perceive, observes Necker, as clearly as I could, the changes of times and circumstances, they could see the power of public opinion, the great effects it had produced, the necessity of making an alliance with it; that it had concentrated its force to procure the meeting of the States; that its hopes were entirely fixed on the assembly, and that these hopes were not to perish blighted and destroyed by the enemies of the public welfare; that the nation would receive with gratitude any sacrifices that were made to it; and it was for the privileged orders to have contended with the Tiers Etat for the good opinion of the public, for their affection and their support, not leaving that popularity, as they did, to fall entirely, (by a succession of improvident measures) into the possession of the Tiers Etat. They ought themselves to have been the first to propose to unite themselves to the Tiers Etat, and to deliberate in common for the public good; on the same account, to have surrendered their pecuniary privileges. They might have made proper reservations with regard to their particular prerogatives and rights.

It is not to be told, concludes Necker, what would have

been the sensation thus produced, the authority they would have thus acquired, and the opportunity that would thus have been afforded to so many of the Tiers Etat, to have rallied round them in support of the general weal, to be accomplished, by every rational and peaceable method; and, after all, they would but thus have anticipated the necessity they were afterwards obliged to submit to: it was evident these privileges would have to be sacrificed, and that the national concerns could not at that particular period be treated of by three separate assemblies. But circumstances, says Necker, often are such, that the part of wisdom is not to wrestle with them, but to leave them behind, and seize in advance some good position. A wisdom indeed this, he says, of all the most rare. The common course is to suppose one makes a sacrifice, when one only submits to necessity; and one loses one's opportunity to negotiate, as it were, on free terms, while one is yet free and competent to do so.

Such are the representations of Necker, and may be admitted. All this may be very true, but forms no proper defence for M. Necker for his *prior* mistakes. He may indeed show the subsequent want of policy or temper in the privileged orders; but this is a great question, and one that we arrive at after we have determined the question of the prior and preparatory conduct of M. Necker and *not before.*

There was no reconciling the respective pretensions, continues M. Necker, of the three orders; the king became quite uneasy; he required them to send commissioners to discuss them before him in council; they did so: it was in vain; long debates ensued.

I endeavoured to accommodate all difficulties, says Necker. I submitted propositions to the commissioners for that purpose; there seemed to be no objection to them. The nobility however made reserves and distinctions which were equivalent to a refusal, and as such were seized upon by the Tiers Etat, who then declared themselves the National Assembly. The nobility afterwards wished to have recovered the false step they had made, but it was too late.

No doubt the Tiers Etat, in voting themselves the National Assembly, in affecting thus to supersede the necessity of the concurrence of the other two orders, says M. Necker, were

guilty of every fault that can belong to an usurping power; but the two orders, at this period, particularly the nobility, committed every error that could result from a want of policy, circumspection, and foresight.

Such are the general representations of Necker; and the two orders may have conducted themselves with the want of prudence, the Tiers Etat with the spirit of encroachment he describes; but the question is, whether any of the parties acted differently from what might have been expected; and whether their subsequent ill conduct forms any justification of his prior imprudence. M. Necker made a distinct and a reasonable effort afterwards to conciliate all parties. Now, the question is, whether all the efforts he afterwards made might not have found their place in the king's declaration *originally*. Might he not have anticipated and provided some measure to prevent the difficulties which he might have foreseen would otherwise arise? And is not M. Necker to be asked whether the king, by first, and originally, pronouncing and determining what Necker afterwards proposed, would not have taken his best course? Whether this would not have been the best chance of preventing the collision, the exasperation, that afterwards ensued, and that could not but ensue; the best chance of preventing the mistakes of the privileged orders, the usurpations of the Tiers Etat, the unhappy diminution of that royal authority which it was so much the wish of Necker, and of all wise and good Frenchmen at the time, to defend from disrespect and violence?

No doubt, it is easy for us, or for any one, to be wise after the event; but Necker, from the first, saw and felt the force of public opinion; no one more so; indeed too much so: it was his business, therefore, as soon as possible, to take some position, such that he might either secure the best chance of avoiding a contest with public opinion altogether, or, that he might contend with the best advantage.

Circumstances are not easily appreciated at a distance of time or place; the precise influence and effect, that each or any of them ought to have upon a reasonable mind, called to decide at the moment; but Necker seems to have been of a temperament too sanguine. He had expected more wisdom, more disinterestedness, from the parties than was reasonable;

more, than they afterwards showed. As a man of sense and humanity, he was desirous that something should be done for France; he must have supposed, that if the double representation was not conceded to the popular party, nothing would. He therefore granted it. He had expected, no doubt, to influence afterwards all parties, by showing them, from time to time, what it was just, and right, and wise to do; but he should have prescribed what was just, and right, and wise, by the royal authority in the first declaration, and he should have left nothing to be settled, that he could possibly avoid, by the result of the general fermentation and the conflict of the three orders.

I do not see that these general conclusions will be disturbed by turning to the pages of Me. de Stael. She mentions the sufferings of Necker during the seven years that intervened between his first dismissal and first recall, between 1781 and 1788; with what anxiety, with what melancholy, he saw the precious years elapse, within which he thought a system of political happiness might have been created for France; observing every project of his own neglected or overthrown. She shows that the times, views, and opinions of the three orders and of society, when the States of 1614 assembled, to which the aristocratic accusers of her father continually appealed, were in every respect different from any that could be supposed to exist in 1789; that, on the whole, neither the assembling of the States themselves, nor the doubling of the Tiers Etat, could have been avoided by Necker. The last point she labours at great length.

"But," says Me. de Stael, "the natural consequence of the doubling of the Tiers Etat was, according to the notions of Necker's accusers, the voting by head, not by order."

"No," she replies, "it was rather the voting in two chambers, and to this there could be no objection, but the contrary. Why, then," she continues, "why, then, according to the same accusers, did not M. Necker make the king pronounce upon this point, when he granted the doubling of the Tiers?"

"He did not do this," she replies, "for he thought an alteration like this ought to be concerted with the representatives of the nation." Here I apprehend lay the whole mistake

of M. Necker; and it is in vain that M^e^. de Stael immediately subjoins, "Two houses were recommended by M. Necker afterwards, when the representatives had been assembled, as above, but in vain;" and France was thus destroyed, she thinks.

France may thus, as she supposes, have been destroyed, with its aristocracy and monarch; but it is not by such reasonings and statements that M. Necker can be extricated from the censures of his critics; and if France was ruined by any one mistake more than another, it was apparently by this mistake of M. Necker.

I do not say that the king should have resolved to establish two chambers, and have altered the whole constitution of France in this manner by his own authority, but that some measure should have been well weighed beforehand, and then converted into a part of the original declaration—the measure, for instance, not of two houses, but those that Necker, on the part of the king, afterwards proposed; at all events, some measure by which he and the royal authority were to stand or fall. Fall they could not but do ultimately, if, without ordaining from the first some measure of their own, they were to abide by the result of a conflict between the Tiers Etat and the two orders, in the existing state of Paris and the kingdom. On the whole, and as a sort of explanation, it must be remembered, that in the interval of his first and second administration, Necker carried on a controversy with Calonne, in which he was assisted and supported by his philosophical friends and the adherents of the new opinions. This controversy had no very good consequences, nor could have. It exposed the evils of the existing system (not very necessary this, at the time), and exposed also the indecisions and weakness of the court. Those who were then of the court, and were Necker's friends, must notwithstanding have thought well of the measures of Calonne, and have become at length indisposed to Necker. Necker was thus placed in a sort of opposition to the court, got entangled in the new opinions, and could not disengage himself from the influence of his Paris coterie in the consideration of the questions which arose on the assembling of the States. This was probably the real fact. Influence arising from circumstances like these might

affect his mind without his being well aware of it. He had also, as he himself confesses, his own too sanguine hopes and aspirations, and he shared them with the generality of wise and benevolent men at the time. It might not be that he wanted decision, that he wanted foresight: *these* might not be the *only* solutions of his conduct, when he left the questions open which we contend he should have anticipated and decided. It might be that his wishes and his opinions were, that they should be decided on popular grounds, and the wishes and opinions of the court being the contrary, a sort of tacit compromise took place in his mind, and he on the whole thought it best that nothing should be settled, and therefore nothing was settled.

Turning, however, from Necker, and casting, as I conclude, one glance on the court during this period of French history, surely the want of statesmanlike talents in the king and his ministers, and ignorance of everything that it imported them to know, were never so apparent. What are we to say to this court and ministers, who could, but the year before, mix themselves with the politics of Holland, and even engage on the popular side; as if what they had experienced from a similar conduct in the case of America could be no warning to them—and again engage on the popular side, when from their own embarrassments, and the state of public affairs at home, they could not possibly engage with effect; that is, fan the flame of liberty, which at the very time they thought was ready to consume themselves; and, because their opponents around them were not already sufficiently animated and enterprising, make them still more contemptuous, powerful, and determined, by yielding the palm to England and tarnishing the national glory in the face of Europe, and this, too, to the illustration of their hated rival? All this time there were Sieyes, and Target, and a hundred other writers, leading up the public to the overthrow of the monarchy. But the truth must be confessed: governments who thus deport themselves in the midst of their difficulties and dangers, appear rather to earn their destruction than to meet it.

# LECTURE VIII.

## TIERS ETAT.

I HAVE described in the last lecture the views of Necker and his situation, referring myself in the main to his own works and to his own statement of the case, as he drew it up at a subsequent period, deliberately considering it in the calmness of his retirement. It is difficult to judge of the conduct of statesmen, no doubt; for, in politics, existing circumstances are every thing. On the present occasion, however, we judge not a little from the materials which he himself submits to our consideration; and though no mistake was of more importance to the world than his, if it was one, we may determine, as I conceive, on the nature of it in this instance, with rather more confidence than in most others.

In politics, I have just said, existing circumstances are every thing. Not that the general rules of justice and right are to be made light of or forgotten, but that wise and good men must in politics look earnestly to discover the expediency of the case, and that this can only be judged of by the circumstances. Very painful struggles are sometimes occasioned by the doubts that arise, which of two general rules of obligation it is best, that is, it is ultimately most expedient to prefer; including in the word expedient, as must never be forgotten, the importance and sanctity of all moral obligations. But a statesman, above every other moralist, (he is only a moralist on a larger scale,) is bound to mark well the nature of every thing around him at the moment, and to adapt well his means to his end. With him, above all others, success is included in the idea of his merit: not only must his objects be noble, but the expedients he uses to accomplish them must be adequate to their purpose. He must not injure his fellow creatures, however good his intentions; it is

wisely ordained, as has been well shown by Adam Smith, in his Moral Sentiments, a work which I must earnestly recommend to you, that intentions are not sufficient, lest men should rest satisfied with their good intentions. And if a minister, an actor in the scene, is to be so affected by the circumstances under which he is to act, so must you be, when you are to judge of his conduct. The period now before us in the history of the Revolution, is, of all others, the most critical. After the preparatory lectures I have given, I might now proceed at once to the opening of the States General, in May, 1789; but the circumstances, as I have said, are in politics every thing, and I must still endeavour to give you some further specimens of those that were connected with this memorable scene, that the scene itself may be better understood. You must meditate these things hereafter in the detail of the history, but in the mean time I must provide you with any general notions of it I can, by any slight sketch that it is in my power to make.

Before, therefore, I advert to the opening of the States General, which I shall do before I finish this lecture, I shall endeavour to afford you, in the first place, some view of the situations and opinions of the different parties concerned, by some quotations from the speeches or writings of those who may be considered as the representatives of those leading divisions of sentiment that then agitated this great kingdom. After this is done, which may or may not be a little tedious, I will proceed to the opening of the States. The three great classes, as you will easily comprehend, were first, the moderate men; secondly, the supporters of the old régime; and thirdly, the followers of the new opinions.

To allude, therefore, to each:—Of the moderate men the best example that I can produce is Mounier. He was one of the most enlightened and virtuous members of the constituent assembly; he has left some works behind him, and it is in these that you must look for such opinions and feelings as may be said in general to have belonged to wise and good men at the time. Referring then to such matters as we have been discussing, he seems clearly of opinion, that the king had a right according to ancient usage, and might certainly, according to every principle of political expediency,

have prevented all the discussions and disputes that afterwards took place, by settling himself the forms and constitution of the States General.

Great mistakes he conceives to have been committed; he is far from blaming the intentions of the king's advisers, but their mistakes, he thinks, were clear and very important. He had been a considerable man in the states of Dauphiny; and there, and afterwards in the Constituent Assembly, his object had always been a limited monarchy; where the power of the crown and the rights of the people should mutually support and guarantee the existence of each other.

M. Necker must have depended on the number and weight of the moderate men that were to be found in the States General and in the nation.

Such men (there were many of them in the Constituent Assembly) sympathized with the new opinions, but were not out of reach of the old; they were willing to improve the situation of France by an admixture of both; to advance her political situation, to secure her civil and religious liberties, but not by violence, not by means of a revolution.

So much for the moderate men, of whom Mounier is the best specimen; Necker is another; and you will see what were their views by referring to their works.

I will now allude to those who sympathized with the old opinions *only*, and afterwards to those who were the supporters of the new.

About the time that Necker prevailed on the king and council to adopt the double representation (in December, 1788), five princes of the blood addressed a memorial to the king, which showed the views and feelings of that high aristocratic party, which then and ever after existed in France; those who were destined to support, under all circumstances, and at all hazards, the ancient forms and modes of proceeding, and the ancient spirit, principles, and ranks of the monarchy.

"Sire," they say to the king, "the state is in danger—(this is in December, 1788, the States meet in the following May of 1789)—the virtues of the monarch ensure him the homage of the nation; but, sire, a revolution is taking place in the principles of the government, brought on by a ferment

in the minds of the people: institutions held sacred, and by which this monarchy has prospered for so many ages, are made subjects of debate, and even decried as replete with injustice. The writings which have appeared since the assembly of the Notables has been sitting, and the memorials which have been delivered to the undersigned princes, the petitions drawn up by several provincial towns or societies, the object and style of these petitions and memorials, all proclaim and prove a digested system of disorder and contempt for the laws of the state. Every author sets himself up for a legislator. Eloquence and the art of writing, even though destitute of study, knowledge, or experience, seem to bestow a sufficient title to regulate the constitutions of empires. Whoever advances a bold proposition, whoever proposes a change of the laws, is sure to find readers and partisans. Such is the unhappy progress of this effervescence," continues this petition or remonstrance, "that opinions which some time ago would have appeared entirely reprehensible, are now thought just and reasonable; and what good men are now hurt at, will, in a short time, perhaps, pass as regular and legal. Who can say where this rashness of opinion will stop?"

They then advert to the subjects more particularly before them, the double representation, &c. and at last observe:—

"Let the Tiers Etat then cease from attacking the rights of the other two orders; rights, which being as old as the monarchy, ought to be as unalterable as the constitution of it; and let them confine themselves to soliciting a decrease of the taxes with which they may be surcharged; then might the two higher orders finding in the third countrymen, who are dear to them, generally renounce pecuniary privileges, and consent to support the public burdens with the most perfect equality."

Here, indeed, we have language from these princes of the blood, which if but addressed to the sovereign *a few years before*, might have saved them and the sovereign from destruction.

"Then might the two orders," they say, "finding in the third countrymen who are dear to them, generally renounce pecuniary privileges."

And why could they not, *before*, find in the third estate countrymen who were dear to them? Why could they not before do upon the general principles of humanity and benevolence, not to say of justice, what they were now, it seems, ready to do, but only when they had just before pronounced the words "Sire! the state is in danger."

But the trial of the two privileged orders, their temptations to abuse their power, was now past. They had failed; that of the Tiers Etat was now to begin, and they were destined to fail also. It is but too often thus. "Let the Tiers Etat," (these princes of the blood observe, these princes who had now become monitors to others,) "let the Tiers Etat reflect what in the end might be the consequence of invading the rights of the clergy and nobility, and the result of the confusion of the orders. The French monarchy must degenerate into despotism or become a democracy; two different kinds of revolution, but both deplorable."[2] This was but too true, but what had been done by themselves to prevent it? The peers of the realm, about the same time with these five princes of the blood, addressed a letter to his majesty, in which they supplicate him to receive their solemn wishes to bear a just proportion of the taxes and public burdens according to their fortunes, without any pecuniary privilege whatever; and they had no doubt, they said, that the same sentiments would be unanimously expressed by the gentlemen (that is the smaller nobility) of the kingdom, if assembled. And so the event proved; the same wishes being expressed in the instructions of the nobility of almost all the bailiwicks of the kingdom, when they sent deputies to the States General. All this wisdom was, alas, too late. Of this tardy wisdom I will just give another specimen, that of the parliament, and then proceed further to the views and opinions of other patrons of the old régime.

The parliament during the general fermentation, at the close of the year 1788, had ceased to occupy public attention; but when the Notables broke up, on the 7th of December, 1788, its members made an effort to regain their popularity, in a decree, which seems to include their general notions on the principal points of French liberty. They contend for the periodical return of the States General; no subsidy to be

allowed that was not granted by the States; the responsibility of ministers; the protection of personal liberty; the lawful freedom of the press; the suppression of all those taxes which marked a distinction between the orders, and that they should be replaced by common subsidies equally imposed on all."

Here again in this last article we see the same tardy wisdom in the parliament that has been witnessed in the two privileged orders; an equal taxation in vain proposed at the close of 1788, which, if conceded to the sovereign at the time he required it, a few years before, might have prevented the Revolution.

This Revolution was now approaching fast, and this celebrated parliament of Paris, that had for the sake of the public, resisted so often, (and in prior reigns more particularly, though not in the reign of Louis XVI.) resisted so virtuously the monarch and his ministers, and suffered so often exile and imprisonment, was cast aside by the public (after their manner) as an assembly now, without use or meaning, and was never thought of more. But to return to the patrons of the old régime.

In January, 1789, the Marquis de Bouillé saw a terrible storm, as he tells us, ready to burst upon the kingdom, and dreaded the consequences; troubles appeared to him inevitable; he was apprehensive of a civil war. Speaking of the States General, he considers Necker as having made no proper exertion for its composition.

He mentions facts that are important. The ecclesiastical members, he says, were principally chosen from among the inferior clergy, without livings or property; among the representatives of the nobility were many subtle, daring, and intriguing men, who meant but to corrupt and divide the order; and the third estate, he says, was laid open to a description of men, numerous and dangerous in France, those who lived by their talents, their literary abilities, and their industry; lawyers, principally of the lowest class; physicians, artists, writers of little or no eminence, and men without either rank or property. Of three hundred members who represented the clergy, two hundred and eight were possessed of no ecclesiastical dignity. Of six hundred who represented

the Tiers Etat, three hundred and seventy-four were professors of the law. These were important facts no doubt, and of awful augury. Indeed it appears," he says, "that however the clergy and nobility had been summoned, much of their relative importance had been lost since the former periods of their sittings.

"In the order of the clergy, the dignities of the profession had not been, as formerly, the reward of virtue, piety, and an active discharge of duty; the higher clergy were composed of the young nobility of the court and provinces. The order, therefore, had lost much of its consideration, especially as the respect for religion itself had been gradually weakened."

His representations go on in the following manner:— "The nobility had lost much of its ancient splendour. There were in France nearly thirty thousand noble families. Four thousand civil offices either gave or transmitted nobility. The king granted patents of noblesse. There were about one thousand families whose origin was lost in the remote periods of the French monarchy: of these, scarcely two or three hundred had escaped indigence and misfortune. There were two hundred families whose names existed in history. If honorary titles were borne by some old and illustrious families, they were likewise shared by a multitude of new nobles, who by their riches had acquired the right of assuming them. The nobility had nothing to distinguish them but the favours of the court and exemption from taxes. Much of what the nobility and clergy had lost of their riches, power, and importance, had been gained, according to the marquis, "by the third estate." Commerce had enriched the third order, not the nobility, who would not engage in trade. Many of this part of society had become superior to the nobility in wealth, and talents, and personal merit, yet they were excluded from rank in the army, from high ecclesiastical preferments in the church, and even from the higher class of the magistracy; the major part of the sovereign courts admitting only the nobility into their bodies. The States General of 1789 were thus, says the marquis, "opened under very unfavourable circumstances. The people had become inclined to intrigue and licentiousness; in all their ranks was remarked an aversion to the established authorities, and a contempt for the

persons of those who exercised them;" and finally and on the whole, the marquis conceives, "that it would have required the greatest energy and address, not merely to guide their labours to useful objects, but even to prevent them from overturning every thing from the foundation."

The same general conclusions that are thus presented to you by the Marquis de Bouillé, you will see also in the Memoirs and Annals of Bertrand de Moleville. All these works are extremely interesting and valuable. They exhibit to you the notions of the court and the privileged orders; and at the same time show the unhappy case, that by the folly of their prejudices and the injustice of an ill-digested system of government had at length arisen.

But while, in the manner you have seen, the princes of the blood and the privileged orders were now desirous only to support the ancient system of the monarchy, very different were the notions that had circulated through society, and got possession of the minds of the most intelligent part of the country, had from them descended to the multitude, and become the conversation of statesmen of every description; the young and the old, the low and the high, the ignorant and the well-informed. I will, therefore, now introduce you to the advocates of the new opinions.

I have mentioned two works, the History of the Revolution, par Deux Amis de la Liberté, and the Précis, by Rabaud de St. Etienne. You will be able, by turning to their pages, to form some idea, though probably a most faint one, of the general fermentation that then existed. As a specimen, I will allude to the work of Rabaud de St. Etienne. He writes in 1791, immediately after the close of the Constituent Assembly, and produces the sentiments and opinions which he must have entertained from the first, or rather such as he still entertained, notwithstanding all the intermediate events, since May 1789.' Observe the general tone of what I quote.

"The French nation," says he, "has for ages been submitted to arbitrary laws. The people, that is every thing in free countries, and nothing in those that are despotic, with us, has been subjected to a number of tyrannies, so great, that the best part of its substance has been dissipated in im-

posts, levied by force or fraud, by superstition, or under the pretence of privilege.

"The sovereign has raised more than most of the great princes of Europe together. The clergy has drawn one-fifth of the net produce of the territorial revenues of the kingdom; the nobles, by their feudal rights, have in reality levied taxes, yet have paid nothing themselves. A crowd, in like manner, of those that have been privileged, and those that have been ennobled, have acquired by purchase a right of exemption from the public expenses.

"Wars, which kings," continues St. Etienne, "seem never to have been able to do without, have furnished a pretext for levying soldiers, and then soldiers have in their turn been the pretext and means of new wars. See a regular army, and you may say, There goes a tyrant, or one who will soon become so. In a vast extended monarchy like ours, kings could only see by their ministers; and this has ended in the ministers being the government, with all their apparatus of *lettres de cachet*, sinecure offices for the support of their creatures, &c. &c.

"Never has nation been depressed in so insulting a manner as ours, from the time of Richelieu to the States General of 1789."

He then gives the history, passing through the times of Louis XIV. and XV. "And thus," says he, "journeyed on, to its total decline and fall, one of the greatest kingdoms of Europe. The national character has been effaced; and it is to write the history of the Revolution, to trace the steps by which the public mind had advanced at last to complete annihilation." He then describes the labours and the merits of those who had broken the fetters of tyranny—Voltaire, the philosophers of England, the Encyclopédie, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Raynal. Every tribute is then paid to the good intentions of the king, and he describes his successive ministers; "but reform," he says, "was impossible. It was above the powers of Necker, or any single man. It was for the nation alone to attempt it; and one has seen, in attempting it, to what perils have been exposed the Constituent Assembly and the public welfare." Rabaud was a member, and wrote in 1791. "What an immense coalition," he says,

"had indeed a minister, or even the king himself, to assist him, when he was contending with others—sixty thousand men, nobles or ennobled, them and their dependents; the military men, noble or pretending to be so; one hundred thousand privileged persons, who are not to pay taxes, it seems; two hundred thousand priests, sixty thousand religious; the farmers general, and all the agents of the revenue, with their army, fifty thousand strong, and the multitude of those who had offices, extended even into the smallest towns; finally, the men of the robe, the parliaments, the superior courts, the inferior, and all the people of business, who in one way or another thus lived upon the nation, and became an impost which it would be terrifying to the imagination to calculate. Such was the formidable mass of people that had got possession of France, that held it down by a thousand chains, and that formed the nation, while the rest were supposed to be mere people. This was that mass," says St. Etienne, "that one has seen afterwards unite its voice and its clamours against the National Assembly, because with a spirit and a courage unexampled the Assembly suppressed all the abuses on which *it* depended for its existence."

"From the moment," he afterwards observes, "that the word 'the States General' was once pronounced, that they were demanded by the parliament, and promised by the king, events rushed on, one after another, so as scarcely to be distinguishable. While the nation was only occupied with the delightful thought of some approaching regeneration, that should for ever remove it out of the reach of tyranny, those who then held the mastery of the nation were only occupied with the means of retaining their empire. But the imposing colossus of the majesty of the people found, every hour, its growth advancing, and trampled under its feet successfully every fantastic authority by which it had been so long subjugated.

"The provinces, in the mean time, abandoned themselves to all that excitation of mind that naturally arose from a sense of all the evils to which France was exposed, all the indignities and the outrages which it had suffered, and the hope of a better order of things. Dauphiny led the way. Innumerable writers," he says, "recalled the Tiers Etat to a sense of

their rights. Some mounted up to the origin of the monarchy, and traced, in characters of fire, the progress of despotism, the absolute power of twenty tyrants, and the consequent degradation of the nation. Others found, in the history of the States General, the proofs of the national authority, and that it was the nation that was the sovereign. Others mounted still higher to the original and imprescriptible rights of every people.

"Paris became the very concentration of intelligence and light. Societies, correspondencies, were formed. The press was in fact free. Publications were every where dispersed adapted to the comprehension of the lowest orders.

"The government was without resource, and could only leave every thing to be either said or written without further stay or molestation."

These passages, written by an active, able, and respected member of the Constituent Assembly, even so late as about the time of its termination, will give you some slight notion of the situation of Paris and of France in the months that more immediately preceded and that followed the meeting of the States General in 1789; some notion also of the general views which had been formed by the more ardent and leading members of the Constituent Assembly.

When these general views of Rabaud de St. Etienne had been but too successful, he retired, and was soon dragged from his retreat to perish under the guillotine.

In the history of the Two Friends of Liberty, the sentiments and opinions are of a nature so similar, that I do not occupy your time with producing them; it is one of the histories which you should read.

But the extracts I have given from Rabaud de St. Etienne, and even the perusal of both these histories, will give you but a very inadequate notion, I am satisfied, of the spirit in which the new opinions were conceived, and the ardour and sweeping fury with which they were at this period every where in France circulated and maintained.

It was under these ominous circumstances that the meeting of the States General took place in May, 1789. To this memorable meeting we will now advert. And to give you a sort of general picture of the first and ceremonial part of it, I will

quote a few paragraphs from a writer, the most beautiful of all, M^e^. de Stael; one who, from the liveliness of her imagination and the quickness of her feelings, could sympathize with whatever was reasonable or affecting in the opinions or situation of every party, and therefore appears to belong to every party in its turn; but who was in truth most deeply and most honourably attached to the principles of civil and religious liberty and to their cause in France, but could not do otherwise than be disappointed and grieve over the failure of her father, and mourn over the calamities of her country.

"I shall never forgot the moment," says M^e^. de Stael, "when I saw the one thousand two hundred deputies of France, moving on in procession to hear mass, the evening *before* the opening of the States General. A striking spectacle for the French, and one unexampled.

"All the inhabitants of Versailles and people of curiosity from Paris assembled to see it. A new sort of authority thus arisen in the state, of which one knew not either the nature or the force, quite amazed the generality of those who had not reflected on the rights of nations.

"The high clergy had lost something of their consideration, for many of the prelates had not been sufficiently regular in their conduct.

"A long peace had left the nobles little or no opportunity, however desirous they might have been, to recall the memory of their ancestors. Those of the second order (of the nobles) had been equally without opportunities of distinguishing themselves, for no career was open to them but that of arms. Those who were ennobled, and who were seen marching in great number in the ranks of the nobility, seemed to carry with but little grace their plume of feathers and their sword; and one asked oneself why they were to be thus placed in the first order of the state, merely because they had *bought* the right of not contributing their part to the public imposts.

"But whatever was lost to the nobility and the clergy was added to the importance of the Tiers Etat. Their habits and black cloaks, their fixed looks, and their imposing number, drew every eye upon them.

"Men of letters, merchants, and a great number of lawyers, composed this third order. Some nobles had got made

deputies, and among these was above all to be remarked the Count de Mirabeau. The opinion that one entertained of his powers of mind was singularly increased by the terror inspired by his licentiousness; yet was it that very licentiousness that diminished the influence which his astonishing faculties were fitted to procure him. It was difficult to take one's eyes away, when one had once seen him. His immense head of hair distinguished him; one should have supposed that, like Samson, his strength depended on it. The countenance of the man borrowed expression from its very ugliness, and the whole appearance of him gave me an idea of some great irregular force and power, in short, such as one should expect to find in a tribune of the people.

"I was in a window," she continues, "by the side of Me. de Montmorin, wife of the minister of foreign affairs, and I abandoned myself I confess to the most lively hope and exultation at seeing, for the first time in France, the representatives of the nation. Me. de Montmorin, in whose mind and talents there was nothing at all remarkable, observed to me in a decided tone, which afterwards impressed me much, 'You are quite wrong to be in such spirits on this occasion; great calamities will be the result of all this to France and to us.'

"This unhappy lady," continues Me. de Stael, "perished on a scaffold with one of her sons, another drowned himself, her husband was massacred on the 2d September, her eldest daughter perished in the hospital of one of the prisons, her youngest before thirty, borne down with her afflictions. The family of Niobe herself suffered not more. She must have had a presentiment, one would have said."

Me. de Montmorin was probably a woman of ordinary good sense, whose judgment was not disturbed by any irregular impressions of the feelings or wanderings of the imagination, like that of Me. de Stael; and such women, by a sort of general tact, which operates like instinct, the result of mere commerce with the world, and the common feelings and vulgar interests which form the history of it, are generally able to form a far more accurate opinion on any practical case before them, than women of genius like Me. de Stael; and the same observation may be extended to the men of

talents at this period, not only in France, but all over Europe. In proportion to the intelligence and the powers of each individual mind, with one illustrious exception (Mr. Burke), was the enthusiasm, the hope, and the expectation, entertained of the future liberties of France, and the cause of liberty there and throughout the world.

The States General assembled, therefore, as you see, on the whole, under unfavourable circumstances—the king indecisive, the minister too sanguine, the court bigoted to the old opinions, the Tiers Etat unreasonably inflamed with the new, the populace tumultuous and ferocious.

A riot had just occurred; the house of an innocent and respectable man had been, in consequence of some idle report, attacked and pillaged, and as the first party of soldiers was too weak, it had been found necessary to order out a large party of the French and Swiss guards, with two pieces of artillery, to quell the insurgents. Above one hundred had been killed, some also of the military; a considerable number wounded. This specimen of the populace had just been witnessed. Again, the evening before the opening of the Assembly, the bishop of Nancy, in his sermon, had alluded in some strange manner to the salt tax, and applauses resounded from every part of the church, as if it had been a theatre. The sensibility of the public to the political grievances was, therefore, clearly shown to be of the most intemperate nature.

Nothing, however, could be more august than the opening of the Assembly. You will see, in such books as I have mentioned, a description of the scene. All, however, was false and hollow. The Tiers Etat were determined that the public business should be conducted on one system, the court and the privileged orders on another; and on the first possible opportunity this original cause of dissension was sure to appear, and the most alarming consequences ensue.

In the mean time you will observe the speech of the amiable and unfortunate king, the expressions he uses in his address to the collected wisdom of his people.

"The convocation of this Assembly has fallen into disuse, but I have not hesitated to re-establish a custom from which the kingdom may derive new force, and which may open to the nation a new source of happiness.

"I have already ordered considerable retrenchments in the expenditure. I shall direct the exact state of the finances to be laid before you.

"The public mind is agitated, but an assembly of the representatives of the nation will without doubt only listen to the counsels of wisdom and prudence. You must yourselves have felt that these counsels have been swerved from on many recent occasions; but the reigning spirit of your deliberations will correspond with the true sentiments of a generous nation, whose love for its king has ever been its most distinguishing characteristic. I discard every other recollection. All that can be expected from the tenderest interest in the public welfare, all that can be asked of a sovereign, the firm friend of his people, you may and ought to hope for from me. That a happy harmony may reign in this Assembly, and that this epoch may become ever memorable for the happiness and prosperity of the kingdom, is the wish of my heart, the most ardent of my vows; it is, in short, the prize that I expect from the rectitude of my own intentions and my love for my people."

Such was the general tenor of the king's address; a very favourable impression, it seems, was made upon the audience; the simple dignity of the king, the air, the tone, the cordial expression with which he delivered his speech, were not without their effect on a people ever quick to feel, could they but be steady enough to retain, the sentiments that do them honour; but nothing was pronounced by the king on the real subject of difficulty, the mode of voting.

The keeper of the seals followed, but with a feeble voice, ill-heard, and what reference he *did* make to the great point at issue might have been better spared, "that the king left it to the States to consider of the best manner of collecting the votes, though the mode by head appeared, by giving one general result, to evidence better the general wish."

Necker followed, but seems to have disappointed every one. His discourse was considered as tedious, declamatory, and academical; above all, as contributing nothing to the instruction of the Assembly on political subjects; as deciding nothing with regard to the real difficulty, the mode of voting. This point, the mode of voting, whether by order or by head,

it might still appear to have been (legally at least) within the competence of the king to have determined; the different orders of the Assembly had not yet verified their powers; they had as yet obtained no legal existence; the king was as yet the only constituted authority in the state: but the state was now distempered in the extreme; the opportunity, if it ever existed, was lost by Necker, lost, most unhappily, and for ever.

The democratic leaders of the Tiers Etat made haste to strike the first blow; they sent a civil message to the two orders, inviting them, as if it had been a matter of course, to unite with them in order to verify in common their writs of return.

Nothing could be more assuming and improper; such I confess it appears to me, but it may not to others. The natural course was, for the members of each order to lay their writs of return on their own table, and for commissioners of their own to report upon their validity to their own separate house. Why were the other two bodies to exhibit themselves before the Tiers Etat? It was not the Tiers Etat that had called the Assembly together; who had made the Tiers Etat a ruler and a judge? Indeed, strictly speaking, the verification should have taken place before the king in council, since none of the deputies was competent, before the verification of his own powers, to verify those of others: and if this mode was objectionable, as giving opportunity to the king and court dishonestly to reject particular deputies, the only alternative seemed to be the mode we have mentioned; indeed, had the king even on the day of opening observed in his speech, that the verification of the powers was a necessary preliminary to all deliberation in the States General, and had he directed that the deputies should declare their titles to the keeper of the seals, in order to be verified by committees of the council, it is possible that no one would have questioned the regularity of such an order, and it might have been executed, perhaps, as of course and without opposition—all this is, however, doubtful. The public had been long in a high state of fermentation, were evidently animated in the extreme with the expectations that had been held out to them by popular writers; and the nature of the new opinions was

now to be exhibited. The democratic leaders were determined that nothing in the shape of public business should begin to exist, but upon the system which they thought conducive to the public welfare, the system of voting by head; they concluded, that if each assembly once assumed a legal and separate existence, the three could never afterwards be made to vote in common; they conceived that nothing would be done for the public if the deliberation was to be carried on by orders. The public were with them; so was upon the whole the minister Necker. The nobles were not unanimous, still less the clergy; and not only the rash and enterprising patriots, but even the men of sense and good intentions among the Tiers Etat appear all to have concurred in these violent proceedings, in the measures of unjustifiable pretension and usurpation that now took place.

The nobility saw the crisis in which they were placed, and made every effort to preserve their consequence; but with the community they were in no favour; the king and his ministers had imposed upon them a contest from which they ought to have saved them, and which they should have undertaken themselves; and of the order of the clergy, a large part consisted of those of an inferior rank, the curés, little inclined to be favourable to the interests or even the particular rights of their superiors. This distracted state of things existed for some weeks, and this suspense, by giving opportunity to the public mind to get inflamed, was of the most fatal consequence; and at last the ministers seem to have been alarmed. M. Necker, on June the 4th, came forward with a conciliatory plan, the sum and substance of which was,

That the three orders should trust each other with regard to the verification of those writs on which no difficulties had arisen, and that if any should arise, they should be carried before a commission chosen out of all the orders, and finally, if necessary, the dispute should be referred to the king.

This scheme, which would have satisfied all parties if the dispute had been sincere, entirely failed; and the Tiers Etat, at last, proceeded to declare, that the names of the clergy and nobility should be called over as well as their own, that they would then constitute themselves an active assembly, and proceed to public business with or without them.

It would not have been now easy to have contrived a safe measure for the court, or a prudent one for the nobility and clergy.

In the event, when the Tiers Etat called over the members, as they had announced their intention of doing, three curates appeared; they were, of course, received with the loudest acclamations, embraced and hailed as the saviours of France.

The Tiers Etat were sure that the example of these three curés would be soon followed, and that ultimately, both the clergy and the nobles would be left, those that resisted, in an insignificant minority, and obliged to submit to whatever terms might be imposed on them.

Five-weeks had now elapsed, no-public-business done, no effort made for the happiness of France; it was the obstinacy of the nobles that was supposed in fault by an impatient public; little attention was paid to the unjustifiable nature of the pretensions of the commons, who now not only required the nobles to submit the verification of their powers to them, but that they should sit (the real point to be attained) in the same house with them. More of the clergy now joined the Tiers Etat, and the Tiers Etat at last proceeded to drop entirely the notion, that they were only *one* part of the great assembly of the States General, and they actually assumed to themselves the character of the whole, concentrated wisdom and representative consequence of the kingdom; they resolved to call themselves at once "the National Assembly;" the vote, their own vote, was carried by a large majority, and the air resounded with the cry of "Long live the King, long live the National Assembly!"

One thing more remained, not only to assume, but to exercise the power of sovereignty; the power of sovereignty, or what was in effect under the circumstances of the case, a very near approach to it; and to this they proceeded.

They issued what they called a decree to the following effect: "that inasmuch as the contributions now levied in the kingdom, not having been consented to by the nation, were all illegal, and consequently null; the National Assembly declared that they consented provisorily for the nation, that the taxes and contributions, though illegally established and levied, should continue to be levied till the day of the sepa-

ration of the Assembly, after which they were to cease if not regranted by the Assembly."

By these acts of supremacy, made without the concurrence of the other two orders, and without waiting for the approbation of the king, they not only decided the two former questions about the mode of voting, but they acted as a sort of legislature, as a complete assembly authorized of themselves and alone to reform the old government, in fact to form a new government—certainly to present themselves as such—the government of the National Assembly.

Now certainly to me, I confess, who turn to look on this scene as a matter of history, nothing can appear more unjustifiable than the whole of a conduct like this; but it may not to others; what had the king done, or even the court, to make it necessary? Why was the king to be made so soon to repent of his calling the States together for his own and the public advantage? What indifference had he shown to the public welfare? What measure had he rejected? What effect could usurpation on their part produce, but irritation and hostility on his, and rage and violence on the part of the court? What benefit could hence accrue to the community? Was peace no object? Was not order, and regularity, and a system of conciliation and mutual sacrifices, the best and indeed the only chance for the permanent improvement of the constitution? It seems indeed to have been taken for granted, that unless the states were to vote by poll, no benefit could result from their meeting; but this was an assumption, and in truth a very violent assumption. The Tiers Etat seem quite to have overlooked the most important circumstances of the case: the progress of the new opinions; the ferment of the public mind; the influence of public opinion; the intensity of the expectation of the community; the difficulties that the king and court would be under if they ventured often or very materially to disappoint that expectation. It might have been asked them, what measure of clear importance and benefit to the state, if pressed for by the Tiers Etat, could long have been withheld by the king and the other two orders. Suppose the privileged orders had been made to contribute equally to the public taxes, and suppose provision had been made for the future meeting of the States General, would not even this

have been sufficient to secure eventually, in the existing state of the world, a complete though gradual amelioration of the whole system of the government? Why was the Assembly to rush forward in this manner, and assume to themselves the office of what they called the regeneration of France; to set aside all the existing authorities, the king included, or only to consider them as subservient to themselves, as only useful or estimable as they would contribute to forward their own particular views of political expediency; as they would or would not assist them in new organizing society, or in giving, as they termed it, a new constitution to France?

There is no doubt that the majority of the Tiers Etat meant well, there is no doubt that very wise and very good men concurred in these proceedings, there is no doubt that the greatest blessing that can be procured for a nation is civil liberty, that just allowance must be made for men who step forward in a cause so noble and so animating, but it is on these very accounts the more necessary for history to criticise such men; because the mistakes of bad men and arbitrary rulers do not necessarily lead to liberty, while those of good men and virtuous patriots inevitably do to the loss of it.

These are, I confess, the opinions that I have found myself obliged, with whatever hesitation and indeed with some surprise, at last to form; but I am well aware, that other views may be taken of these proceedings by the friends of liberty, and I shall endeavour to put you in possession of the whole of the case by adverting to them in my lecture of to-morrow.

# LECTURE IX.

## TWENTY-THIRD OF JUNE.

AT the close of my lecture of yesterday, I referred to the first proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, and I submitted to your consideration the reasons why I thought them so objectionable; they were objectionable, in a word, because they were more or less violent and assuming at a time, when every thing depended upon the moderation of the parties; and as the Assembly were on this occasion the first to quit the path of peace, it is they who are to be most visited with censure, because in all disputes they, who are first wrong, are most wrong. But to such observations as I have made in my last lecture, it will be replied by those who, though friends to liberty, are as deeply impressed with the necessity of peace and order as I can be, or as any one can be, that the nature and situation of the French people, of the king and court, of the patriots themselves, the time, the occasion, the circumstances, and all the exigencies of the case must be considered; and that then, such animadversions as I have made on the conduct of the assembly, must be materially modified if not entirely abandoned.

It will contribute, I think, to the clear understanding of this, by far the most difficult discussion and the most important that the history of this Revolution affords, if the different measures which I have presumed to blame are separated from each other and surveyed apart, and if we proceed step by step.

The first and great point was, in truth, the mode of voting, whether by orders or by head, whether in one Assembly or in three Chambers.

This was the first and great point; the dangers and difficulties on each side of the question were always sufficiently

apparent, and they have been already exhibited to you. But in defence of the strong measures just adopted by the Assembly, it will be observed, that the States General had now met; the Tiers Etat been assembled; the members of it now brought into contact with each other mutually to explain their grievances and expectations; that the prior and existing fermentation of the public was very great; and that in this situation of things, the doubling of the Tiers Etat in the original formation of the Assembly was considered a virtual concession of the right of voting by head; that Necker and his friends so understood it; that they considered it as a popular concession, and meant the crown to have the credit of it; but why popular if it had no popular object, and no distinct object? The Tiers Etat followed up this virtual concession by assuming at once that the three estates should act together; and how are they to be blamed?" What other chance in the known temper of the court for any reform in the administration of the government? What other chance for tranquillity amid the general hopes and fears and impatience of the public? A majority in any one house obtained against them, what probability of any reform?

In return rather than in answer to this reasoning, it must be first remarked, that it is here we find the accusation of Necker, it is here that his fault appears. If Necker left these points open, it was but too probable that the leaders of the Tiers Etat would reason thus; it was impossible that the public should not sympathize with them; it was impossible that a ferment should not arise, which the king and the court were little fitted, either by gentle means or by force, to encounter and subdue.

But when all this has been allowed, may not then the observations I have made be suffered to find their place? Are the patriots of a country, are the more wise and enlightened leaders of the public emotion, to rise superior to the temptations of their situation, or not? They are to be praised, highly praised, if they do; but are they not to be blamed, if they do not? What is ever human virtue but some elevation of the character more or less of this description? What chance for the public weal but in the prudence of the court on the one side, and the moderation of the Tiers Etat on the other?

But what moderation did the Tiers Etat exhibit in thus requiring the king and the two privileged orders to abandon all their inherited notions and feelings? What moderation in requiring them to take the chance of one great assembly in which all ranks and orders were to be confounded; an assembly where every thing was to abide the decision of a majority; an assembly where the Tiers Etat already constituted one half? Why was the first step of the Tiers Etat to be that of relatively annihilating the personal consideration, the legal and long established dignity of every individual in the country but themselves? Why were they to suppose that no one had any interest in the public good but themselves? What measure, calculated to promote the public good, had been as yet rejected by the king? What opposition as yet made to the reasonable wishes of the public? Why was it to be taken for granted by the Tiers Etat that all wisdom and benevolence were monopolized by themselves? What was hereafter to be expected from them if this was to be the first specimen of their views and character? What respect for the nobility and clergy of the land? What safety for the monarch? What peace for the people? What was meant, or what could be meant, by all this ferment in the public mind, this cry for the regeneration of France? Was it or was it not meant, that nothing at the time established should eventually exist; and was it then the scheme of the Tiers Etat to merge all the dignity and authority of the country in one Assembly, and that, their own? And was this the first measure for the purpose or not? Would language of this kind then, let it be asked on the whole of the case, would language of this kind have been unnatural or even exaggerated, or materially unjust, if held by any of the members of the two higher orders at the time? And if so, is not the charge of violence, of want of reasonableness, of want of moderation in the Tiers Etat, made out; and if this charge be made out, *has not* blame been incurred?

The subject must be here left, I conceive, to the decision of every man for himself. There seems to have been little doubt among the members of the Tiers Etat upon these questions at the time, but the lesson of instruction for after ages, I must still think, is what I have presumed to draw,

and only the more necessary to be drawn on that very account. The next question is, what was to be done by the court and the privileged orders? That is, supposing that the Tiers Etat were unreasonable in their expectations, and insisted on the voting by head, what was then the best policy, the proper conduct of the privileged orders?

Necker bitterly complains that these points were not given up, and the union, which the Tiers Etat required, made with a good grace and at once.

It is possible, it may, I think, on the whole be allowed, that in the situation in which Necker had placed them, or suffered them to be placed, the best measure with a view to the public good and their own safety, was the union which he wished. It was a most fearful measure to be obliged to take, but on the whole it was the least objectionable. In the state of general irritation that prevailed, the public expectation was to be gratified within any tolerable bounds, as quickly as possible. If the Tiers Etat were to be resisted, some better point was to be taken than one, which would appear to the public only a point of form; whether it involved an important principle or not (it certainly did one most important), still it would not be so considered by the public, and would be thought by them to have no effect or meaning, but that of paralyzing all public business; of indicating, perhaps, the resolution of the king and court to escape from all measures of reform whatever. The Tiers Etat were not likely to give up the point without a protracted struggle; and in civil contentions delay is sure to be fatal to the party which is the *least* popular: it was therefore clear, that the point must be conceded eventually, and therefore the sooner the better.

The chance of resistance to the Tiers Etat was to be taken on some other occasion, when the strong passions, that were evidently ready to burst their holds, had been first soothed, and a large portion of the Tiers Etat and of the moderate men in the two orders, had been conciliated by such prompt measures for the removal of public grievances and the amelioration of the constitution, as would have shown a real sympathy with the public wishes and opinions; and in short, whatever was the chance of the three orders meeting in one Assembly, whether unpromising or not (it was most unpro-

mising), there was now no other, unless an open rupture; a dissolution of the States and a civil war was on the whole preferred.

But they who at all admit the remarks I have made on the first point, the voting by head or by order, in one house or three, will readily concur with the same train of reasoning, when applied to the succeeding point, the vote by which the Tiers Etat constituted themselves the National Assembly: this vote was carried by a majority of four hundred and eighty to eighty-nine, or something more than five to one; an immense majority this, on a question that was to set every thing aside in the state but themselves, to propose to the public no other object on which they were to look with respect or expectation. The vote for independence in America was not carried till a war with Great Britain had been for some time raging; in the instance before us, on the contrary, a vote is carried in the popular Assembly of France for an independence of all the other established authorities of the state, after a contest only of a month, not of violence and arms and bloodshed, but of pamphlets and disputation; not a single act of harsh authority yet exercised, not a reasonable cause of offence yet given. Indecision and perplexity and disunion are indeed very sufficiently evidenced in the conduct of their political opponents; folly, if you please, nothing more; a vain and helpless unwillingness to relinquish in time the constitutional privileges of their birth, and supposed rights of their condition in society; but were these sufficient reasons for a vote, like this, from the Assembly; for standing on no terms with them any longer? Was the sympathy of the public, which they found continually increasing, and rendering them every hour more and more powerful, to be turned to no better purpose than this; to no better purpose than that of rendering the sincere co-operation of the king and court in their designs for the public good, *from that moment, impossible? Wise and good men concurred in this vote at the time; this must be admitted: but* whatever explanation I may see of it, I confess, I see no proper defence.

This lecture was written many years ago, but in the work lately published, the posthumous work of M. Dumont, it

appears that Mirabeau said to him, when dying, "Oh, my friend, how right we were when we endeavoured at the first to prevent the Commons from declaring themselves the National Assembly! It is this that has been the source of all our evils. From the moment they carried that victory, they have never ceased to show themselves unworthy of it."

The next point is their decree relative to the levying of taxes; they evidently voted that they were illegal, without consent of the National Assembly.

No one will deny that this was a very strong measure, scarcely justifiable, as appearing too like an assumption of the legislative functions, by one only of the three estates. Still it will be contended, that it is going too far to consider it as an act of sovereignty. The States, it will be observed, were met, among other objects, for the purpose of consenting to taxes. They assumed, that whenever former States General had met, they had consented to taxes and given subsidies; and, although the crown had exercised this power for centuries without control, the States might with propriety contend, that the right had now been recognised anew. The king had himself lately declined any further attempts to raise new taxes on his own authority; the decree therefore only went to declare, as a constitutional principle, what had already been virtually acknowledged. Such will be the view that will be taken of this subject by many of the friends of freedom. It will be asked, at the same time, who could tell whether the king might not, any day, change his ministry and dissolve the States. What greater calamity for France; what calamity which it more imported the patriots to provide against? How could they better provide, than by making it difficult for the king to raise money without their consent?

It is probable that reasonings of this kind were very current with the most distinguished members of the Assembly at the time; but if so, they afford a memorable instance of the unhappy nature of civil contentions, how readily men of the first intelligence become inflamed amid a general ferment, and how easily they overlook the most obvious distinctions of propriety and right. Taxes and subsidies, as every one knew, were voted by the *States General*, not by the *Tiers Etat*—by all the *three* orders, not by *one* of them, acting for and

assuming the authority of the whole.' But the Tiers Etat had not yet been joined by the nobility and clergy. The more the origin and nature of these general assemblies were inquired into, when the times of Tacitus and the Germans were once left behind, the less important would appear the Tiers Etat, that now called themselves, single as they stood, the National Assembly, and arrogated the office and functions of the whole legislature of the state. The king might decline the exercise of the powers which his ancestors had so long usurped, but surely never meant to devolve it on the Tiers Etat. 'The king might any day change his minister, and dissolve the States, but the proper defence against such a contingency, when any defence really became necessary, was a resolution, not a decree—a resolution by the Tiers Etat declaratory of the nature of this constitutional power, explaining, asserting, and recording it, where it lay, and by whom it could be exercised; not a decree, assuming to themselves all the legislative authority that belonged in fact to the States General.' A disrelish of the new opinions, an indisposition to any new order of things, might be suspected by the patriots in the court and the privileged orders; a change of counsels in the king, and some arbitrary measure to dissolve them, might be thought possible by the Tiers Etat; but were they, therefore, thus to provoke it and to justify it? Were they to be the *first* to set an example of violence and usurpation? Were they to keep no terms with the sovereign, and to leave him no sentiment but that of regret and that of terror at having summoned them to his assistance at all? 'Certainly the very eminent men who were now leaders in this Assembly must have totally distrusted the court and the privileged orders, must have strangely over-estimated the power of their opponents, must have thought it their duty, not only to make a revolution, but their policy to take the whole management of it instantly into their own hands, lest nothing should be done for the country—to avail themselves of their popularity as soon as possible, and at once; to keep alive their popularity, and to paralyze all opposition by the energy or rather violence of their proceedings. And the welfare of their country, the noble objects which they meant to accomplish, must have justified in their own minds the irregular means they were using.

Such must be the explanation of their conduct, but, as I have already ventured to say, it is not, I think, their defence.

To return to the history.

The Tiers Etat having now, so early as the 17th of June, voted themselves the National Assembly, and assumed, or so nearly assumed, the sovereign power of the state, it was high time for some measure on the part of the king. Even Necker himself must have been ill at ease. It never could have been his intention or his wish (whatever might be his popular feelings) that the monarchy should be endangered, or all the power of the state be merged in that of the Tiers Etat. It was therefore resolved that the king should hold a sitting on the 23rd.

This sitting of the 23rd is the next great step in the Revolution. You must observe it well. You are in this sitting to see the terms offered by the king and the court to the popular party.

But some unhappy fatality seems to have over-ruled the destinies of this great kingdom; not only to have made her patriots intemperate, but her ministers or the court thoughtless and imprudent to a degree exceeding all belief; and many circumstances left no fair chance for this reasonable measure, this royal sitting of the 23rd. The hall in which the Commons assembled was the place, on account of its size, where the king met and harangued the States. Workmen were therefore sent in, to erect a throne; a party of guards took possession of the place for the king; the royal sitting was formally proclaimed, (through the streets of Versailles indeed,) by the heralds, but unfortunately no proper notice had been given, no formal communication made, to the Assembly or the president, of what was intended; and M. Bailly, the president, with other members of the Commons, when they repaired, as of course, to hold their sitting in their own hall, were repulsed without ceremony from their own door.

The Commons very naturally conceived, not that terms were to be offered to them, but that an immediate dissolution was in fact intended: they must have been conscious that their own proceedings had been irregular and violent, and they must reasonably have expected some violent measure in return from the king and the court; they therefore hurried

away, through a severe storm of rain, to a tennis-court, where with proper spirit and firmness, though in something of a theatric manner, they bound themselves with a solemn oath never to part until the constitution was completed: even on this occasion, it must be confessed, by the nature of their oath, plainly showing the unlimited extent of their views. They seemed to proclaim that France had no constitution, and that they were determined to create one, and to proceed to lengths which had certainly not been in the contemplation of the king when he called them together, nor of those whom they represented. Still, as they were now at issue with the court (whether by their own fault or not it was in vain to inquire), and as all seemed lost if they ceased to exist, no other expedient was left them but some resolution of this kind; some vote or decree that should intimate that they were superior to fear, and would not desert what had become the cause of their country. M. Mounier, one of the most virtuous men in the Assembly, was the proposer and framer of the oath; but it was his measure to prevent an adjournment to Paris and more violent proceedings. All these were circumstances that very much indisposed them to listen to the king with any proper temper or moderation when he addressed them, a few days after, at the royal sitting, and brought forward his intended measure.

The next day, immediately after this day of the tennis-court, was signalized by a most important event, the union of a body of the clergy with the Tiers Etat. The nobility had not yet given way. It does not appear very intelligible why the clergy should have fixed upon this particular moment for their junction, when the king was evidently at issue with the Tiers Etat, and when the royal sitting was expected in two days. It was probably from the feeling excited by the scene in the tennis-court and a measure of sympathy. They were received with fraternal embraces, and loaded with praises as a band of patriots who had come in a moment of imminent danger to save their country.

How far the Assembly afterwards remembered, with proper gratitude, the service that was now rendered them by the clergy, you will have occasion in due time to observe.

This union of the clergy naturally made the Tiers Etat

more confident that they should, ere long, be joined by the nobility; and this persuasion could not but tend to make them less ready to receive the offers of the king, though it should have made them more so. Again, besides the shutting up of their hall, to which we have alluded, other marks of neglect were shown to the Tiers Etat; and on the day of the royal sitting, they were kept waiting till the other two orders had arranged themselves in their proper places—waiting in the rain with little shelter, while they not only saw the ostentatious procession of the court, the embroidered heralds, and an unusual display of the pompous carriages and gaudy liveries of the noblesse, but military detachments patrolling the streets of Versailles, and even posted around the very hall of the Assembly, where they were at last admitted, apparently to receive their orders.

All these unhappy circumstances are for ever to be deplored, and those by whom they might or ought to have been prevented (the king could have had nothing to say to them), are never to be forgiven. For this measure of the sitting of the 23rd you will see fail, and, as I conceive, most fatally for France. Men will be men. Allowance must be made for the irritations to which the members of the Tiers Etat were thus exposed.

In the course of this lecture, my humble censure, such as it is, must fall on the members of the Constituent Assembly; but the student must never suppose me insensible to the merit of all expressions of patriotism, if they be but sincere—of all generous exertions in the cause of civil liberty, if they be but well-meant—of all resistance to unworthy indignities and to oppression, if but honest.) It is my province, however, to draw lessons from history—to make patriotism prudent, a love of civil liberty wise, and a resistance to authority, of whatever kind, careful, circumspect, and fitted for the nature of man and of society.

The royal sitting was held on the 23rd. The king ascended the throne, and produced the plan of a new constitution or system of government; it was read to the assembled orders, and was a piece of considerable length. You must consider it with great attention, for it is a most important document in the history of the Revolution.

It was, on the whole, a great outline of a system of government; it was, in short, an offer from the king and court to the patriots—the extent of the concessions that could be admitted by the retainers of the old opinions to the patrons of the new.

The question, therefore, is, what should the patriots have done? To me it appears that this was an offer with which the patriots should have instantly closed.

Whatever objections, deficiencies, or imperfections were to be found in the system proposed, there were none that might not hereafter have been provided for. The main points were secured, and the dictatorial style which was too often assumed by the king might have been overlooked, as the ancient form of expression, and pardoned, from a spirit of forbearance and conciliation, for the sake of the peace of the community, and the great advantages that were evidently on the point of being for ever established.

It was observed, however, that M. Necker was not in his place. The fact was, that the plan had been originally drawn up by that minister, but having been altered, materially altered, and made, in his judgment, less fitted for its purpose, he had thought it improper to sanction it by his presence. This was the most unfortunate circumstance of all. He was very popular at the time, and no plan was likely to succeed with the Assembly, or rather with the public, which he did not countenance; and it was a grievous mistake on the part of the court not to have taken his advice in the perilous situation in which they stood, at least not to have come to some understanding on the conduct which he meant to pursue. Better to have given up their measure, than left him to remain in visible opposition to them.

"It is probable that no system of government founded essentially on old opinions would have satisfied the majority of the Assembly, who were heated with the new opinions, and who longed for some great experiment for what they believed the happiness of France and of mankind. Still it must be remembered that Mirabeau was in the Assembly. He never seems to have meant to destroy the monarchy; a limited monarchy and a representative assembly seems to have been his notion of civil liberty.

It is possible that great assistance might have been derived from him, if Necker's original plan had been produced, and if Mirabeau had been in time consulted and propitiated, as he might have been. All the wise and moderate patriots of the Revolution, Mounier and others, were then in the Assembly, and still in possession of the public favour, and might have been consulted and conciliated also; but there was no prudence in the court nor attention to their situation, and every thing turned out unfortunately, as has always been the case when the civil liberties of this great country were at issue. In England it has often been the reverse. Setting out from nearly the same beginnings, I have repeatedly had to observe to you how different were the points at which the constitutions of the two kingdoms from time to time arrived.

I consider this royal sitting of the 23rd of June as so important an event in the history of the French Revolution, that I particularly wish to direct your attention to it, and must exhibit it to you a little more distinctly.

M. Necker has dedicated his fourth section of his first volume of the French Revolution to the consideration of it. He explains the notions which he himself had formed of the situation of the monarchy and the kingdom, and nothing can appear more reasonable.

His object was to assert and support, as much as possible, the rights and consequence of the monarch, which he saw were visibly and really sinking fast; he therefore drew up a declaration for the king to produce at the royal sitting, and, with the ministers that acted in concert with him and the king in council, his success had been complete; in fact, the council was just on the point of breaking up, every thing settled and agreed to, when an officer came to the king, and, having whispered him, the king immediately got up, and desiring the ministers to await his return, left them sitting, and went out.

"This can only be a message from the queen," said M. de Montmorin to Necker; "the princes of the blood have got her to interfere, and persuade the king to adjourn his decision."

So it turned out. The king, after being absent half an hour, returned, and, in spite of every consideration that could be

suggested to him, adjourned the debate to the next council. It was not held till two days after, and two princes of the blood and four magistrates were added, new to the subject, which had now to be discussed entirely afresh.

It was soon evident to Necker that his original measure was not to be carried. He was desired to confer confidentially with some of the new counsellors. He made what concessions he could, as he thought, with effect; but no: the whole plan was in the event, as he thought, so materially changed, as to be no longer one which he could intimate his approval of by personally appearing at the sitting. He resisted to the utmost, protested against the whole measure, and announced his intention of resigning. His brother ministers, even M. de Montmorin, seem to have agreed with him.

He does not give the original declaration as he had intended it to stand; the MS. was burnt during the subsequent terrors of the Revolution; and though he points out some of the alterations that were made by the court, he might, on this part of the subject, have entered more into detail, with some advantage to his reader and to his own character, as he was accused by the court of unreasonable pertinacity, of perversely, of factiously absenting himself from the sitting, and as it was his object to show that all such accusations were unfeeling and unjust. But, fortunately, in the appendix to Bertrand de Moleville's Memoir, the declaration and the articles are given.

B. de Moleville is very loud and decided in his censures of the conduct of Necker, and you will find no difficulty in judging of the plan as Necker originally proposed it, and as it was subsequently altered and read by the king. I must repeat to you, that this is quite a crisis in the history of the Revolution.

You will see, I think, that it was a plan to which, even as it was at last left to stand, the Tiers Etat should have acceded; but that it was altered so essentially that Necker had a right to say it was no longer his measure, and that he would not be responsible for it as minister of the king. Still you will see, I think, that it was a plan to which the patriots should have acceded. It was essentially altered, for the very first article in the declaration, as really delivered by the king, annulled the decree of the Tiers Etat by which they voted

themselves the National Assembly, with all the resolutions that followed, as illegal and unconstitutional. Necker had thought it best (as it certainly was) to be silent, and to declare nothing of the kind; and it was but too evident (to all but the court) that the king had no longer the power to control the Assembly in any manner like this.

Necker observes, that the king, in his own proposed declaration, had *enjoined* the *three* orders to unite in common when deliberating on affairs of a common interest; that in the *altered* declaration, the first *two* orders only were addressed, and only *exhorted*, not enjoined. And again, that at the end of the declaration, the three orders very unwisely, and, as it turned out, very fatally, were ordered to separate, and to repair to their own halls to renew their sittings the next day.

Necker, in his plan, had made the king reserve to himself the power of *sanctioning* any future scheme of the States General with respect to their future constitution, declaring, however, that the Assembly must be composed of at least two chambers; but in the altered plan, the king was made to reserve to himself the adjustment of the future form that was to be given to the States General.

The alterations were evidently all on the side of the crown, all tending to make the whole measure less likely to succeed with the Tiers Etat. And as Necker contends, and very justly, that he had ventured upon certain articles in favour of the crown (he mentions those which were sufficiently important and unpopular), the alterations must be considered as on the whole very injudicious, and such as Necker could not possibly admit.

Now all these are points which deserve the attention of the student. Whatever shows the wisdom of Necker shows the folly of the court, and becoming one of the reasons why the Revolution did *not* succeed, becomes in fact one of the lessons of history.

For the student must not forget, that it was a great calamity to mankind that the Revolution did not succeed—that the cause of liberty, the noblest of all causes, was thus on the whole lost.

But it was lost, I conceive, because the Tiers Etat did not on this occasion consent to close with the king, and proceed,

on the terms and in the spirit of the declaration, to the settlement of the kingdom.

The points of the subject are, then, first, that the court most improperly and unpardonably altered the declaration, and made it more irritating to the Tiers Etat than M. Necker had thought wise; more than this, that they had made it of such a nature that he thought it could not succeed with them, and that he, therefore, declined appearing as the author of it on the day of the royal sitting.

2dly. That though this might be the case, still there were left in the measure such common grounds for the king and the Assembly to have stood upon, that the leaders of the popular party should have received the measure in a spirit of kindness and conciliation, and proceeded upon it immediately, to the establishment of proper provisions for the present and future happiness of their country, the danger to the state being so very great on every other supposition.

This they did not. The most dreadful consequences ensued, and were sure to ensue, fatal to the monarch, to France, to the great experiment in the cause of liberty which they were themselves attempting to make, and therefore very injurious to the best interests of Europe and of mankind, perhaps for ages.

This last point as well as the first you will consider. Whatever caused or contributed to the event, is a lesson of history.

Observe what were some of the articles of the king's declaration, as they were finally suffered to stand by the queen and her advisers. I mention them as reasons which should have induced the patriots to have acceded to the declaration. No new tax was to be levied, no old one prolonged beyond the time fixed by the laws, without the consent of the representatives of the nation. Such as existed were only to remain in force till the next meeting of the States. Consider how much was contained in these concessions. When the right of the purse was yielded up, and a new meeting of the States was thus secured, what further concession was necessary? Every further improvement and security would gradually have been obtained, as in England, by this power of the purse.

No new loans were to be made without the consent of the

States General, with a particular exception, reasonable in itself, which was mentioned.

'The public finances, the revenues, the expenses, were all to be submitted to the examination of the States. Every concession in matters of this nature was offered.

'The clergy and the nobility were to be sanctioned by the king in that renunciation of their pecuniary privileges which they had already promised. The taille was to be abolished.

'Every thing that could be said, according to the existing notions of France and the real difficulty of the case, really *was* said, on the subject of *lettres de cachet.*

'A very reasonable declaration was made on the delicate subject of the liberty of the press.

Provincial assemblies were promised — assemblies that, apparently, would have created a respectable magistracy throughout the kingdom.

Upon a variety of other articles, some of great importance, —the king's demesnes, for instance, the internal custom-houses, the tax on salt, &c. &c.—nothing could be more reasonable and benevolent than the articles of the declaration.

The corvées, the capitinaries, were to be abolished.

The value of these articles of the declaration will be seen by the student, if he will look into one of the chapters in Young's Tour in France; a work, several parts of which will be found entertaining, instructive, and very much to our purpose, the concluding chapters more especially.

The declaration, no doubt, laid down the sacred nature of all property, tithes and feudal rents included.

The king also willed that the ancient distinction of the three orders should be preserved entire, as essentially connected with the constitution, and declared null the deliberations taken by the Deputies of the Third Estate on the 17th of the month, as well as all others that might have followed it, as illegal and unconstitutional.

This was, you are aware, the decree of the Tiers Etat voting themselves the National Assembly, assuming the right of taxation, and in fact the sovereign power. Upon these acts of usurpation Necker had thought it best to say nothing. He seems rather to have hoped hereafter, by a proper adjustment of the powers of the crown and the Assembly, to render them

null and void in effect, avoiding, in the mean time, a subject of certain controversy and irritation; but this was a wisdom which the court could not reach.

The fifteenth article was unhappily but of too much importance. "A proper regard to good order," says the article, "to decency, to the very freedom of the Assembly, all require that his majesty should prohibit, as he expressly does, that any persons, except the members of the three orders composing the States General, should be present at their deliberations, whether held in common or in their separate houses."

The student will have abundant occasion hereafter to remark the influence of the galleries on the events of the Revolution. It had been already shown but too strongly when this article appeared.

The galleries, however, were the means which the Tiers Etat made use of to awe and control the court, and most unfortunately the popular leaders could neither do with them nor without them.

This was certainly, during these more early periods of the Revolution, the great difficulty. The difficulty was not properly disposed of by this article of the declaration, but it was clear that the *interference* of the galleries was, at all events, to be prevented, if not their presence.

The concluding article was, that having called together the States to effect, in concert with him, the great objects of public utility, he was obliged to say expressly that he reserved to himself the army, the police, the military power, such as it had always been exercised and enjoyed by the monarchs of France.

He had before, in the first part of the declaration, observed, that he wished to lay before the States the different benefits "that he intended to concede to his people; that he wished not to circumscribe their zeal within any limits which he might trace out; that he should adopt with pleasure any views of the public advantage which should be pointed out to him by the States; that he might say, he thought, without flattering himself, that never had monarch done more for any nation, but that no nation had ever better deserved it from a monarch, than the French nation; that he had no fear of saying this, but that they who, by exaggerated pretensions, by unseason-

able difficulties, still retarded the effect of his benevolent intentions, were no longer worthy the name of Frenchmen."

These were his expressions in the opening of his declaration, and he ended the whole by saying,—

"You now see the result of my wishes and my views; they are agreeable to the lively anxiety I feel to effect the public good; and if, by a fatality which is the furthest from my expectations, you abandon me in so noble an enterprise, I will myself accomplish the welfare of my people—I will consider myself as their true representative; and, knowing as I do the instructions you have received, and the conformity that exists between the wishes of the nation and my own intentions, I shall derive every confidence that is the necessary result of such a harmony between us, and I shall proceed forward to effect an end so desirable with all the courage and firmness by which I ought to be inspired.

"You will consider that none of your projects or dispositions can have the force of law without my special approbation. It is thus that I am the natural guarantee of your respective rights.

"All orders of the state may repose upon my equitable impartiality; any distrust on your part would be to me the highest injustice. It is I who have hitherto been doing every thing for the welfare of my people, and it is very rare that the only ambition of a sovereign has been, to obtain from his subjects a disposition in them to receive his benefits."

It was in this sort of dignified, and on the whole not unbecoming, though somewhat impolitic manner, all circumstances considered, that the monarch of the French people concluded the declaration of his sentiments, views, and intentions, on this great occasion. It would have been happy for themselves and for the world if the National Assembly had been in a temper sufficiently composed, and of a wisdom sufficiently prospective and steady, to have borne this representation of the hitherto acknowledged rights and natural expectations of their monarch; if they had made due allowance for what they might have supposed the prejudices of his education and the temptations of his situation; and if at all events they had taken care to provide for the public peace, by proceeding on a system of conciliation, without which conciliation they with

their galleries, and the court with its army, were not likely to do much for the cause of liberty, in any rational sense of the word, then or eventually.

But all such modest expectations, such moderate views, that may even now, to many friends of the liberties of mankind, appear ill suited to the occasion, were considered, by the leaders of the popular party at the time, as totally unworthy, or rather were never considered at all.

Some years after I had written what you have now heard, I had the satisfaction of finding that the same view of the case was taken, even at the time, by Mr. Jefferson, who was then the American ambassador, and who says in his Memoirs, that he remonstrated with the French patriots, and advised them by all means to close with the proposals of the court.

The measure of the royal sitting totally failed: the king's address was received with a cold and ominous silence; the concessions not duly estimated; the situation of the king not considered; the acknowledged rights of the sovereign overlooked; and the usual tone and language of all addresses from the throne totally forgotten. Very different, indeed, are the feelings and opinions with which we now read this part of the history, from the feelings and opinions which then animated the great patriotic leaders, and indeed the more intelligent men, not only of France but of Europe. On this last point you may refer to the violent notice taken of this royal sitting in the Vindiciæ Gallicæ; the author, the late Sir James Mackintosh; who then meant to be, what he has ever since been, an enlightened upholder of the rights and happiness of his fellow creatures.

To us who live at the present period, however sincerely we may feel the love of civil liberty, the difficulty of procuring it by violence and revolution is sufficiently apparent; the sort of hope and confidence with which we speak on such subjects is very different from what it was, on the breaking out of the French Revolution. The value of all concessions from power, of all steps to improvement, of all progressive advances to amelioration, are, by this time, duly estimated (I speak of men of sense and experience). We no longer talk of organizing a community afresh, of regenerating a kingdom, of giving a constitution to a great people, with all the ease and dispatch

which at the breaking out of the French Revolution was thought possible. The wisest men and the best, at that period were, no doubt, dazzled and made confident by the delusive and irrelevant example of America; and nothing was thought of but the original rights of the people, the imperfections of society as it then existed, and the dignity and the happiness to which a people might be exalted; exalted by no more difficult process, it was understood, than their own wishes. It was a favourite maxim, that a people had only to will to be free and to be so. Doctrines like these may be so modified and veiled as to be reducible to salutary practice; they may be, in secret, the principle of vitality to the free constitution of a great people; but it was a little too much to expect, that they should be the maxims which should prompt the feelings and colour the language of a monarch of France, when now only for the *first time* addressing the States General of his kingdom.

This is the unreasonableness, this is the intolerance for all old opinions, that distinguished, at that time, the holders of the new. Bristling with their logic, and confident in the superiority of their reason, every thing, they thought, (for they were generally young men,) might be safely intrusted to the prevalence of reason among mankind; and as this will ever be the case on all such occasions, and with all such men who are also on such occasions the most effective part of the community, this becomes one of the lessons of history.

Again, and on the contrary side of the question, little less intolerance of the *new* opinions, it must be observed, was felt by the court and the holders of the old opinions; either now or at any subsequent period; "all or nothing" was always their maxim, and this is *also* the lesson of this history. But on the present occasion, on the occasion of this royal sitting, it should be considered, that concessions many and important had been made; they afforded a sufficient ground on which to have proceeded to the settlement of the kingdom, and the main blame must rest with the Tiers Etat, after deducting the blame that rests with the court—for great blame certainly does rest with the court; and out of common justice to the leaders of the Constituent Assembly it must be remembered: on occasions of this kind, imprudence is fault.

You must observe then, that the concessions made by the king, considered with reference to the state of the government *de facto* for some centuries past, were, no doubt, very great, and as such, should have been felt and acknowledged and acted upon; but whether they were so, with reference to the state of opinion and the public expectations *at the time*, is more doubtful. The royal prerogative was now so injured in general estimation, and the many experiments made with a view of avoiding the present necessity had been so unsuccessful, and had so damaged the government, that it was hardly considered to be in a situation to propose terms, still less to determine the extent of the concessions to be made. There was no longer a disposition to accept a constitution as a boon." The popular writers all agree in representing this measure as one of the most doubtful expediency; and the circumstances by which it was attended, as well as the declaration of the king respecting the voting of the orders separately, and the rights of the privileged orders, completed its unpopularity. Until this sitting of the 23rd of June, Mirabeau seems to have hesitated, and to have kept his eye upon the court. He had been against the measure of the Tiers Etat constituting itself a National Assembly, but from the moment of the sitting of the 23rd, from the moment that he saw the folly of the court, he seems to have thought there was no chance for them, and threw himself headlong into popular measures. I apprehend that Mounier and other moderate men felt their influence decline from this period, and that a most unfortunate weight was thus thrown into the scale of the violent party, headed by Sieyes, Chapelier, Target, and others. Unless Necker could have obtained the concurrence of the moderate men, the measure of a royal sitting should never have been resorted to. And again, who could conceive it possible, that the king should have been advised by any one, or should have himself consented to come down to an Assembly, already exasperated and strong in popular opinion, with a scheme that had not been discussed with some of the principal leaders among them? Who could dream at that time of keeping the three orders separate, merely by a royal direction; the clergy in fact gone over, and the noblesse divided? What can we say of a king who could turn away from Necker, the only person near him

capable of forming an estimate of all the circumstances by which he was surrounded, and who could even suffer the violent people of his court so to alter the minister's measure, that the minister could not even appear in his place lest he should seem to approve it? Surely it must be allowed, that a king and a government so unmindful of the temper and circumstances of the time, and of all the plain dictates of the most obvious common sense that belonged to the case, could not possibly avoid their ruin, and by many will be thought even to have deserved it. But it is ever thus: a court and its more immediate supporters can never see either wisdom or virtue in the feelings and opinions of moderate men, and a king but too naturally listens to those who echo his own sentiments. Such, however, is not the lesson of this Revolution.

I turn with pain to mention to you in a few words the scene that immediately followed the delivery of the king's declaration. The preparatory circumstances of this royal sitting had been such, that the popular leaders and the public had been induced to think that a dissolution of the National Assembly by force was intended by the court. The king had himself intimated in his speech, that if they would not concur with him in his wishes and intentions, he would himself attempt to effect the happiness of France alone.

This seemed, no doubt, a threat of dissolution; and troops and artillery had been coming up in a very unusual and therefore alarming manner; four thousand guards were under arms all the day of the session, and seven or eight regiments were assembled in the neighbourhood of Versailles.

The speech of the king had been heard with gloomy silence, and it ended, most unfortunately, with ordering the three orders to separate, and to repair to their appropriate chambers; there, the next day, to resume their sittings. But this was apparently to carry into practice that part (the most offensive) of the declaration of the king, by which he had just annulled the decree of the Tiers Etat, constituting themselves the National Assembly.

It was a very unskilful conclusion of the speech, unless the strongest measures were, if necessary, resolved upon.

The king left the hall; almost all the bishops, some priests,

and the greater part of the nobility, retired in obedience to his commands.

The rest of the deputies remained in their places, apparently at a loss what part to take. According to Bertrand de Moleville, all might have been well, though this is totally improbable, and the means of conciliation announced by his majesty accepted, when Mirabeau arose and in an instant changed the disposition of the Assembly by a speech to which I will just allude for a moment, where the new opinions, as usual, appear, and more particularly the leading notion which so inflamed all France and Europe at the time, "that the states were to make immediately a new constitution in France." "I confess," said Mirabeau, "that what you just heard might be for the welfare of the country, if the gifts of despotism were not always dangerous. Why this dictatorial language, this train of arms, this violation of the National Temple, to command you to be happy? Who gives you the command? Your vicegerent. Who makes imperious laws for you? Your vicegerent! Your vicegerent! he who should receive them from you; from us, gentlemen, who are invested with a political and inviolable supremacy; from us, to whom alone twenty-five millions of men are looking for certain happiness, as it must be granted, given, and received by all. But the freedom of your debates is fettered; a military force encircles the States. Where are the enemies of the nation? Is Catiline at our gates? I insist that, arming yourselves with your dignity and legislative authority, you recollect the religious force of your oath, an oath that does not suffer you to separate until you have established the constitution."

This harangue is represented by Bertrand de Moleville as having had great effect on the deputies; they were warmed and irritated as if the king had really dissolved the Assembly. He certainly had endeavoured to reduce the National Assembly to its former situation and office, as a part only of a whole, as the Tiers Etat only, of the States General, but not more. The Assembly, however, did not retire; the master of the ceremonies, therefore, advanced into the middle of the hall, and observed to them, "that they had heard the king's intentions."

"Yes, sir," said Mirabeau, "we have heard the intentions

of the king; and you who cannot be his agent at the States General, you who have here neither seat, nor voice, nor a right to speak, are not the person to remind us of his speech. Go tell your master that we are here by the power of the people, and that nothing but the power of the bayonet shall expel us."

"Yes, yes," said a great number of the deputies, "nothing but force can drive us hence, the Assembly are determined."

The Marquis de Brezé appeared to refer to the president, who told him that "the Assembly resolved yesterday that they would continue to sit after the royal session, and that he could make no change in that resolution—that it must be discussed by the Assembly."

"Am I to carry that answer to the king?" said the marquis. "Yes, sir," replied the president. The marquis departed.

The Assembly, therefore, and the king, were now in a state of direct opposition.

The king had proposed a limited and modified monarchy built upon the ancient system.

The Assembly had turned away from his declaration and resisted his commands; they had renewed their name of National Assembly, and they had clearly shown that they meant to persist in the exercise of the sovereignty they had assumed: their support too, it was clear, they meant to be the public; under this term by no means excluding the populace, to whom their galleries were now thrown open.

# LECTURE X.

## FOURTEENTH OF JULY. THE BASTILE.

IT was now but too clearly shown, that no composition could be made between the old opinions and the new.

The Tiers Etat had not even entertained the question; they had not even received or noticed the proposals of the king: no doubt he had resisted their assumption of power, and in a manner most unskilful; but they had made no representation; they had offered no address nor remonstrance complaining of any measure or any conduct of his to which they objected; they had shown no disposition to come to any terms. The country, it seems, was to be regenerated; the views *he* had taken were inconsistent with *theirs; his* ideas of the prosperity of France not the same; nor his notions of the claims of the monarch or the duties of the subject.

The king and the court, more especially the king, were now, therefore, thrown into a most perplexing situation; to do nothing, was to surrender themselves to the Assembly; and yet to take any effective measure that led not to violence and bloodshed, was, to all appearance, impossible. The humanity of the king shrunk from every expedient that was to be supported by military execution; while to the favourers of the old opinions, no option but the dissolution of the Assembly appeared to remain.

This seems to have been thought by Bertrand de Moleville the only measure left. He declares it to be so in his Annals, and describes the manner in which he would have had it carried into effect.

'Properly softened down, and more accommodated to the difficult circumstances of the case than Moleville thought necessary, it was, perhaps, one of the expedients, however doubtful, which the king might now have adopted.

For instance, he might have dissolved the existing States General, calling, at the same time, another meeting of them; remarking upon the assumption of the sovereign power by the present Assembly, and publishing the declarations he had made, and the scheme of government he had proposed on the sitting of the 23rd; promising to adhere to it, and to listen to any further proposals for the benefit of the community.

After some manner of this kind he might have justified his measure, and called upon all good Frenchmen to come forward in his support.

No doubt the difficulty was, the opposition that would have been made by the more violent leaders of the Assembly and their partisans out of doors; and the consideration, that new Assemblies, returned on occasions like these, are in general even more refractory than those dissolved.

Still it seems to have been one of the measures left. The provinces were not as yet raised to that state of irritation and enthusiasm, in which were, at this period, Versailles and the metropolis. The clergy and the nobility had not as yet stood in any direct opposition to the crown, and they, and all men capable of sober thinking, at the time, *might* have seen, I am far from saying that they really *did* see, but they might have seen, on comparing the decrees of the Tiers Etat with the declarations of the king, that the monarchy was in the greatest danger, and that the peace of the kingdom was not likely to be long maintained, unless the parties at issue were brought to some immediate agreement; and, on the whole, unless the crown was supported.

Thus far, at least, the conclusions of every thinking man might have been expected, might have been fairly hoped by the king and his advisers, to have gone along with the court; and the experiment properly introduced, explained, and limited, would, on the whole, have been a reasonable one, at least a possible one.

What was attempted by the king, however, though in a spirit of conciliation, was an experiment of a directly opposite nature; the only other alternative. For instance, a large body of the clergy, one hundred and forty-nine (making up now a majority of the whole), and two or three of the nobility, had joined the Tiers Etat in the Church of St. Louis, even before the sitting of the 23rd.

But the remaining body of the clergy were pretty equally divided, though on the 24th, half even of the remainder joined the Assembly; the nobility were more firm and attached to what they thought the interests of their order and the safety of the monarchy; forty-four members, indeed, out of three hundred, the Duke of Orleans at their head (but some of them men of the first estimation for talents and virtue), joined on the 25th, but the main body of the nobility appeared inflexible.

What, however, they did, was to wait upon the king, and after expressing themselves in the most dutiful manner to him in every respect, particularly with regard to his late declaration on the 23rd, to pray him to convene the nobility of the bailiwicks, that they might receive fresh instructions from their constituents.

The king, therefore, now interfered for the sake of the peace of the community. He desired the Duke of Luxembourg to tell the nobility, that he entreated them to join the other two orders; if that was not enough, that he commanded them to do it, as their king; that it was his will.

Afterwards he wrote letters to his "loyal nobility," and to "his faithful clergy," urging them to join the other orders without delay, to accelerate the accomplishment of his paternal intentions, making their compliance a sort of personal favour.

But still the order of the nobility was divided; more than eighty of them thought the union of the three orders would be fatal to the king and to the state, and they seem only at last to have acquiesced from an apprehension that the life of the king might be endangered by their longer resistance.

Thus was, at length, effected the complete triumph of the patriotic leaders.

The nobility and clergy were all merged in the Tiers Etat; the title of National Assembly, the assumption of sovereign power, had been resisted by the king and the privileged orders in vain; and if, indeed, it was necessary for the future prosperity and the civil and religious liberties of France, that the new opinions should entirely prevail, and some great experiment be made to exemplify and establish them, then must the more distinguished members of the

Tiers Etat be considered as having deserved well of their country, and of mankind, by the boldness, the perseverance, and the fortitude with which they had obtained their victory. But it is *only*, I conceive, on this supposition, and whether this supposition ought or ought not to be admitted, *this necessity of the entire establishment of the new opinions to the exclusion of the old*, seems to be one of the leading questions on which the student will be called to exercise his judgment, and to give or withhold his praise accordingly. My own opinion, such as it is, that no such necessity existed, you have already received.

But, with whatever hesitation, the student may or may not form his own, he can surely have no difficulty in determining with regard to another point, that the conduct of the court during all this period was most unskilful, and entirely to be lamented.

In times of difficulty, the governing powers are always, as on this occasion, too late with their concessions.

The wishes and intentions of the king in favour of the people, as seen in the declaration of the 23rd of June, should have been produced long before; before the Tiers Etat had committed themselves, before they had voted themselves the National Assembly, taken the oath in the Tennis Court, and even before they had raised the question of voting by orders or by head.

Neither the king nor his secret advisers can be excused for not showing that timely wisdom, or at least that reasonable decision, which provides for events, and which may, therefore, be said, to a certain degree, to control them; above all, which makes concessions at the proper moment, when they can be offered with dignity and received with gratitude.

We may now, I think, consider ourselves as having arrived at a very particular epoch in the history of this Revolution. We may now, I think, pause, and retrace, in some general manner, the scenes through which we have passed. Such occasional reviews, I conceive, to be useful; and a work occurs to me, which will enable us to do this, and even more; it is the Journal of Arthur Young. He travelled over France as a speculative farmer, in the important years of 1787 and 1789; but being very active and intelligent, he could not fail

to be struck with the political situation of this great kingdom.

The great instruction of history, as I have often observed to you, lies in the comparison of existing notions with subsequent events; this instruction we may here derive, while, at the same time, we may revive the memory of the leading facts of the history, and the conclusions to which they gave rise.

I shall produce for you then some extracts from this book, and you may compare what occurred to him at the moment, with the events that afterwards took place; and this is to be your instruction.

Some years afterwards Arthur Young became what was termed a great alarmist; he did not succeed in his farming, was not affluent, and was at last considered as no very great friend to liberty.

I know not with what reason: it is sufficient for me to say, that he certainly was, when he wrote the work to which I shall now refer. Indeed, there is one of his notes, which shows him to have been very violent and revolutionary in the views which he sometimes took, at least at this period, on political subjects. He was, indeed, a critic, and a sort of discerner of mistakes and faults by profession. The note I allude to would not be unfitted for one of our demagogues, addressing from a stage the populace of one of our manufacturing towns in some unhappy season of their distress; it is in page 556 of his first quarto vol. of his Tour to France. He is insisting, that experiment is as necessary a means of knowledge in relation to government, as in agriculture or in any other branch of natural philosophy; and he concludes thus: — "The British government has been experimented, with what result? Let a debt of two hundred and forty millions, let severe wars, let Bengal and Gibraltar, let thirty millions sterling of national burdens, taxes, rates, tithes, and monopolies, let these answer."

To refer, therefore, to his work, as coming from one sufficiently inclined to popular feelings at the time he wrote, in the year 1787, two years before the Revolution. He speaks thus:—

"One opinion pervaded the whole company, that they are on the eve of some great revolution in the government; that

every thing points to it: the confusion in the finances great; with a *deficit* impossible to provide for without the States General of the kingdom, yet no ideas formed of what would be the consequence of their meeting: no minister existing, or to be looked to, in or out of power, with such decisive talents as to promise any other remedy, than palliative ones: a prince on the throne, with excellent dispositions, but without the resources of a mind that could govern in such a moment; without ministers; a court buried in pleasure and dissipation, and adding to the distress, instead of endeavouring to be placed in a more independent situation: a great ferment amongst all ranks of men, who are eager for some change, without knowing what to look to, or to hope for: and a strong leaven of liberty, increasing every hour since the American revolution; these, altogether, form a combination of circumstances, that promise, ere long, to ferment into motion, if some master hand, of very superior talents, and inflexible courage, is not found at the helm to guide events, instead of being driven by them. It is very remarkable, that such conversation never occurs, but a bankruptcy is a topic: the curious question on which is, *would a bankruptcy occasion a civil war, and a total overthrow of the government?* The answers that I have received to this question, appear to be just: such a measure, conducted by a man of abilities, vigour, and firmness, would certainly not occasion either one or the other. But the same measure, attempted by a man of a different character, might possibly do both. All agree, that the states of the kingdom cannot assemble without more liberty being the consequence; but I meet with so few men that have any just ideas of freedom, that I question much the species of this new liberty that is to arise. They know not how to value the privileges of the people: as to the nobility and the clergy, if a revolution added any thing to their scale, I think it would do more mischief than good."

This was in 1787. You will now observe in what manner Arthur Young writes from Paris, on June 9th, 1789; a most critical month: the royal sitting, you may remember, was on the 23rd.

"The business going forward at present in the pamphlet shops of Paris is incredible. I went to the Palais Royal to

see what new things were published, and to procure a catalogue of all. Every hour produces something new. Thirteen came out to-day, sixteen yesterday, and ninety-two last week. We think sometimes that Debrett's or Stockdale's shops in London are crowded, but they are mere deserts, compared to Desein's, and some others here, in which one can scarcely squeeze from the door to the counter. The price of printing two years ago was from 27 liv. to 30 liv. per sheet, but now it is from 60 liv. to 80 liv. This spirit of reading political tracts, they say, spreads into the provinces, so that all the presses of France are equally employed. Nineteen-twentieths of these productions are in favour of liberty, and commonly violent against the clergy and nobility; I have to-day bespoken many of this description, that have reputation; but inquiring for such as had appeared on the other side of the question, to my astonishment I find there are but two or three that have merit enough to be known. Is it not wonderful, that while the press teems with the most levelling and even seditious principles, that if put in execution would overturn the monarchy, nothing in reply appears, and not the least step is taken by the court to restrain this extreme licentiousness of publication. It is easy to conceive the spirit that must thus be raised among the people. But the coffee-houses in the Palais Royal present yet more singular and astonishing spectacles; they are not only crowded within, but other expectant crowds are at the doors and windows, listening *à gorge déployée* to certain orators, who from chairs or tables harangue each his little audience: the eagerness with which they are heard, and the thunder of applause they receive for every sentiment of more than common hardiness or violence against the present government, cannot easily be imagined. I am all amazement at the ministry permitting such nests and hotbeds of sedition and revolt, which disseminate amongst the people, every hour, principles that by and by must be opposed with vigour, and therefore it seems little short of madness to allow the propagation at present."

This is but a description, as you will see, drawn from the life, of what is meant by the progress of new opinions; of the public opinion having taken a turn against the government of the country; of the current setting strong and furiously: a

very fit subject of consternation in any unhappy country to all who mean well.

Again, on June 11th, he writes thus:—"In these most interesting discussions, I find a general ignorance of the principles of government; a strange and unaccountable appeal, on one side, to ideal and visionary rights of nature; and, on the other, no settled plan that shall give security to the people for being in future in a much better situation than hitherto; a security absolutely necessary. But the nobility, with the principles of great lords, that I converse with, are most disgustingly tenacious of all old rights, however hard they may bear on the people; they will not hear of giving way in the least to the spirit of liberty, beyond the point of paying equal land-taxes; which they hold to be all that can with reason be demanded. The popular party, on the other hand, seem to consider all liberty as depending on the privileged classes being lost and outvoted in the order of the commons, at least for making the new constitution; and when I urge the great probability, that should they once unite, there will remain no power of ever separating them; and that in such case, they will have a very questionable constitution, perhaps a very bad one; I am always told, that the first object must be for the people to get the power of doing good; and that it is no argument against such a conduct to urge that an ill use may be made of it. But among such men, the common idea is, that any thing tending towards a separate order, like our house of lords, is absolutely inconsistent with liberty; all which seems perfectly wild and unfounded."

Here we have the picture so constantly presented to us.

"On one side," he says, "a strange and unaccountable appeal to ideas and visionary rights of nature."

But this will ever be the case in disorderly times, but more particularly when on the other side, as he says, "the privileged orders are most disgustingly tenacious of all old rights, however hard they may bear on the people."

"They will not hear," he says, "of giving way to the spirit of liberty, beyond the point of paying equal land-taxes."

It was only very late, and when too late, that they reached even this point; and they who have power never are in time with their concessions.

A few days after, on the 13th of June, it seems to have been discovered by the public, that all was not harmony in the cabinet. Young writes thus:—

"All this day I hear nothing but anxiety of expectation for what the crisis in the States will produce. The embarrassment of the moment is extreme. Every one agrees that there is no ministry: the queen is closely connecting herself with the party of the princes, with the Count d'Artois at their head; who are all so adverse to M. Necker that every thing is in confusion: but the king, who is personally the honestest man in the world, has but one wish, which is to do right; yet, being without those decisive parts that enable a man to foresee difficulties and to avoid them, finds himself in a moment of such extreme perplexity, that he knows not what council to take refuge in."

This was on June 13th; ten days after, on the 23rd, the king came forward with his *séance royale;* with his views of the state of the country, and the proper remedies of it; or rather with Necker's, but so unfortunately modified, that, as you may remember, Necker would not sanction them by his appearance. Before, however, this meeting of the 23rd, Arthur Young makes a few observations on the hall of the Assembly, the manner of debating, &c.; important points.

"We went immediately," he says, "to the hall of the States to secure good seats in the gallery; we found some deputies already there, and a pretty numerous audience collected. The room is too large; none but Stentorian lungs, or the finest, clearest voices can be heard (and Young might have added, none but violent men). However, the very size of the apartment, which admits two thousand people, gave a dignity to the scene. It was indeed an interesting one. The spectacle of the representatives of twenty-five millions of people, just merging from the evils of two hundred years of arbitrary power, and rising to the blessings of a freer constitution, assembled with open doors under the eye of the public, was framed to call into animated feelings every latent spark, every emotion of a liberal bosom. To banish whatever ideas might intrude of their being a people too often hostile to my own country, and to dwell with pleasure on the glorious idea of happiness to a great nation—of felicity to millions yet unborn."

Again, on June 15th:—"In regard to their general method of proceeding, there are two circumstances in which they are very deficient: the spectators in the galleries are allowed to interfere in the debates by clapping their hands, and other noisy expressions of approbation: this is grossly indecent; it is also dangerous; for, if they are permitted to express approbation, they are, by parity of reason, allowed expressions of dissent; and they may hiss as well as clap; which, it is said, they have sometimes done: this would be, to overrule the debate, and influence the deliberations. Another circumstance is, the want of order among themselves; more than once to-day there were a hundred members on their legs at a time, and M. Bailly absolutely without power to keep order."

The importance of these remarks was in the event but too unhappily shown.

At last he alludes to the sitting of the 23rd of June, which I have just represented to you as one of the important turns of the whole history; nor do I see that his opinion, when on the spot and at the time, is different from my own, writing thirty years afterwards, with all the intervening instruction of events.

He says, "The important day is over: in the morning Versailles seemed filled with troops: the streets, about ten o'clock, were lined with the French guards, and some Swiss regiments, &c.: the hall of the States was surrounded, and sentinels fixed in all the passages, and at the doors; and none but deputies admitted. This military preparation was ill judged, for it seemed admitting the impropriety and unpopularity of the intended measure, and the expectation, perhaps fear, of popular commotions. They pronounced, before the king left the chateau, that his plan was adverse to the people, from the military parade with which it was ushered in. The contrary, however, proved to be the fact; the propositions are known to all the world: the plan was a good one; much was granted to the people in great and essential points; and as it was granted before they had provided for those public necessities of finance, which occasioned the States being called together, and consequently left them at full power, in future, to procure for the people all that opportunity might present, they apparently ought to accept them, provided some secu-

rity is given for the future meetings of the States, without which all the rest would be insecure; but as a little negotiation may easily secure this, I apprehend the deputies will accept them conditionally: the use of soldiers, and some imprudences in the manner of forcing the king's system, relative to the interior constitution, and assembling of the deputies, as well as the ill blood which had time to brood for three days past in their minds, prevented the commons from receiving the king with any expressions of applause; the clergy, and some of the nobility, cried *Vive le Roi!* but treble the number of mouths being silent took off all effect."

"The plan, you see," Arthur Young says, "was a good one; much was granted to the people in great and essential points."

"I apprehend," he says, "the deputies will accept them conditionally."

Arthur Young seems here to have expected too much from the reasonableness of the Assembly. I venture to say reasonableness, for I have always considered the conduct of the great leaders of the Assembly, on that occasion, for they certainly meant well, as exhibiting the most fatal mistake which they committed.

The next day, the 24th, he writes thus:—"The ferment at Paris is beyond conception; ten thousand people have been all this day in the Palais Royal; a full detail of yesterday's proceedings was brought this morning, and read by many apparent readers of little parties, with comments, to the people. To my surprise, the king's propositions are received with universal disgust. He said nothing explicit on the periodical meeting of the States; he declared all the old feudal rights to be retained as property. These, and the change in the balance of representation in the Provincial Assemblies, are the articles that give the greatest offence. But, instead of looking to, or hoping for further concessions on these points, in order to make them more consonant to the general wishes, the people seem, with a sort of phrensy, to reject all idea of compromise, and to insist on the necessity of the orders uniting, that full power may consequently reside in the commons, to effect what they call the regeneration of the kingdom; a favourite term, to which they affix no precise idea,

but add the indefinite explanation of the general reform of all abuses. They are also full of suspicions at M. Necker's offering to resign, to which circumstance they seem to look more than to much more essential points. It is plain to me, from many conversations and harangues I have been witness to, that the constant meetings at the Palais Royal, which are carried to a degree of licentiousness and fury of liberty, that is scarcely credible, united with the innumerable inflammatory publications that have been hourly appearing since the assembly of the States, have so heated the people's expectations, and given them the idea of such total changes, that nothing the king or court could do, would now satisfy them."

Again, 24th June:—"If, on the side of the people it is urged; that the vices of the old government make a new system necessary, and that it can only be by the firmest measures that the people can be put in possession of the blessings of a free government; it is to be replied, on the other hand, that the personal character of the king is a just foundation for relying, that no measures of actual violence can be seriously feared: that the state of the finances, under any possible regimen, whether of faith or bankruptcy, must secure their existence, at least for time sufficient to secure by negotiation, what may be hazarded by violence: that by driving things to extremities, they (the patriots) risk an union between all the other orders of the state, with the parliaments, army, and a great body even of the people, who must disapprove of all extremities; and when to this is added the possibility of involving the kingdom in a civil war, now so familiarly talked of, that it is upon the lips of all the world, we must confess, that the commons, if they steadily refuse what is now held out to them, put immense and certain benefits to the chance of fortune, to that hazard which may make posterity curse instead of bless their memories as real patriots, who had nothing in view but the happiness of their country." This appears to me a remarkable paragraph.

Two days after, on the 26th, he writes thus:—"Every hour that passes seems to give the people fresh spirit: the meetings at the Palais Royal are more numerous, more violent, and more assured; and in the Assembly of Electors, chosen for the purpose of sending a deputation to the National Assem-

bly, the language that was talked, by all ranks of people, was nothing less than a revolution in the government, and the establishment of a free constitution: what they mean by a free constitution is easily understood—*a republic;* for the doctrine of the times runs every day more and more to that point; yet they profess that the kingdom ought to be a monarchy too, or, at least, that there ought to be a king. In the streets one is stunned by the hawkers of seditious pamphlets, and descriptions of pretended events, that all tend to keep the people equally ignorant and alarmed. The supineness, and even stupidity of the court, is without example: the moment demands the greatest decision; and yesterday, while it was actually a question whether he should be a doge of Venice or a king of France, the king went a-hunting!"

Such were the views and observations that occurred to Arthur Young, while only a visiter in the country, and before the unfortunate events that afterwards occurred. They appear to me very creditable to his sagacity and good sense, and very creditable to the country he had left, and the constitution of England under which he had lived—a constitution that had evidently taught him the value of civil liberty, but taught him also the dangers to which it is exposed, and the mistakes that may be committed by its friends and assertors.

We will now return to the history. The royal sitting of the 23d has been held; it has failed: the Assembly and the court are entirely at issue; and the king, turning away apparently from all counsels of violence, adopts other resolutions, and personally interferes in procuring the immediate union of the two privileged orders with the Tiers Etat in one great Assembly.

The student might expect, therefore, that nothing would *now* remain for him to witness, but the labours of this National Assembly for the regeneration of France; that no further interruption would be given by the king and court to their wishes or their plans; that a civil war had been happily avoided by the concessions of the king; and that some experiment of the new opinions, some union and mixture of the claims of the monarch with those of the people, would now be accomplished.

"How honourable," said Mirabeau, "will it be for France,

that this great Revolution has cost humanity neither offences nor crimes." After referring to England and America, their struggles and their sufferings,—"*We*, on the contrary, have the happiness," he said, "to see a revolution of the same nature brought about by the mere union of enlightened minds with patriotic intentions; our battles are mere discussions; our enemies are only prejudices, that may, indeed, be pardoned; our victories, our triumphs, so far from being cruel, will be blessed by the very conquered themselves.

"History, too, often records actions which are worthy only of the most ferocious animals; among whom, at long intervals, we can sometimes distinguish heroes: there is now reason to hope that we have begun the history of man, the history of brothers, who, born for mutual happiness, agree even when they vary, since their objects are the same, and their means only are different."

Such were the observations of Mirabeau, such his views, and such might be also the views of the reader of the history, if he could be ignorant of what followed.

But on a sudden a new scene opens, and one that cannot be explained except in a very general manner, no particular account having as yet reached the public; it is no other than this: troops are brought up and made to approach nearer and nearer Paris and Versailles, Marshal Broglio is appointed to the command of them, and there is every appearance that violence is intended, that the Assembly at Versailles is to be dissolved by force, and that in some way or other, and to some extent or other, the military are to be called in, and the cause of the monarchy of France and of the old opinions to be by their means asserted.

Nothing short of all this can well be supposed from all the circumstances that now took place. There is, however, another solution of all these phenomena, to which I shall hereafter allude; it is this: that the court meant only to maintain the peace of the metropolis and the community; but in the mean time observe the facts, and consent to proceed with me, for the present, on a different, and, as I conceive, more reasonable supposition.

Necker, who, after the 23rd, had become the great idol of the public, intended to have resigned, and was indeed to have

been dismissed, but he was so beset and affected by the entreaties of the people, that he complied with their wishes and those of the king, and remained in his situation of minister. While this was the case, the public considered themselves in a state of security. Necker himself seems not at all to have participated in this new and extraordinary change in the counsels of the king. He declares positively that he knew nothing of these military movements till it was impossible that they could be concealed from any one. "The war minister," he says, "talked of necessary precaution, in consequence of the late seditious appearances at Paris and Versailles, and the explication was natural enough; but could no longer be admitted when Marshal Broglio was called to court. I could never ascertain," he adds, "to what lengths their projects really went. There were secrets upon secrets; and I believe that even the king himself was far from being acquainted with all of them. What was intended was probably to draw the monarch on, as circumstances admitted, to measures, of which they durst not at first have spoken to him. Time," he continues, "can alone unveil the mystery; with me, above all others, a reserve was maintained, and reasonably, for my indisposition to every thing of the kind was decided."

Such is Necker's account. The mystery seems to have been, that the court could not bear the assumption of authority which the National Assembly had displayed, and that when they saw that the two orders had united themselves to the Tiers Etat, they conceived that an assembly like this would trample down the monarch and all the privileged orders without hesitation or delay, and that, therefore, in self-defence, they must try to dissolve the Assembly by military force.

But neither can the court be excused in making this experiment, nor the king in suffering it to be made. The opportunity of trying force had been lost. After the king had desired and commanded the nobility and clergy to join the Tiers Etat, the National Assembly had a right to suppose that their legal existence was acknowledged, and the measures they had adopted forgiven, at least admitted; that it was only by their subsequent conduct they could forfeit the good will of the king; that, in short, all was now to be a

system of harmony and peace. 'Nothing could appear more treacherous, nothing more unjust, than for the king, in this situation of things, to bring up troops from all quarters, as if he had before meant only to lull them into security, the more easily to dissolve the Assembly, and perhaps seize, banish, confine, or even execute for treason, some of their most obnoxious leaders.'

It is difficult to understand how the king, a man of integrity and virtue, could be so blind to the very objectionable nature of the course of measures which he saw himself gradually adopting. He must have really supposed, as the court pretended, that they were necessary to secure the tranquillity of Paris, and the peace and order of the community. What, however, was the reasoning of the court? How could they possibly suppose that the king would not fail them when the moment of trial came? They knew that it was his great maxim that the blood of Frenchmen was not to be shed in what he called his quarrel; how could they expect such a prince to run the chance of a civil war? But what more cruel injury could they do to the monarch and the privileged orders, than, under such circumstances, to try, or rather to *appear* to try, the experiment of military force?

Another consideration still remained behind: were they sure of the soldiery? Unhappy is the government, and at its last gasp, when the military are to be set apart from the community, and the rulers are to depend on the one to subdue the other. There was nothing, on this occasion, to encourage the court to suppose that they could with safety venture upon this fearful appeal. The public had been long in the highest state of inflammation; nothing was expected from the old opinions, every thing from the new; the monarchy had become nothing, the National Assembly every thing; it was from them and from them only, no longer from the king or the privileged orders, that laws, liberty, prosperity, national grandeur, were expected; the three orders had now united; the Assembly seemed just, as it were, on the point of beginning their great work of the regeneration, as they called it, of France; all eyes were turned upon them, all hearts participated in their feelings of every kind: and this was the moment which the court fixed upon to call out the soldiery to

disperse and put them down by force, and all the time to expect that such a metropolis as Paris, in its existing state of excitement, was to look quietly on and submit in silence, while they saw their representatives dismissed, the image of their national greatness dishonoured, and all their cherished dreams of happiness and glory dissipated, at once and for ever, by the rude assault, for such it would have appeared to them, of mere brutal and unenlightened power.

Certainly never was a time so ill chosen for an experiment like this, a prince so ill fitted, a soldiery so unpromising; and, as in judging of all political measures, the probability of success must be carefully and fully taken into account (whatever may be the right), nothing can appear more unpardonable than the conduct of the court on this most critical occasion.

These general reflections will be entirely confirmed by an appeal to the history, into the detail of which I cannot enter. You will see an account given in all the writers to which I have directed your attention. The most full is given in the modern publication of Dulaure.

It will be found that the most common provisions of prudence were neglected: the soldiery suffered to approach Paris, to mingle with the inhabitants; no decision, no alertness of movement; nothing secured from the populace,—the Bastille, the dépôts of arms; nothing arranged or managed as if any measures of hostility or force were to be adopted.

Yet was sufficient warning given to the court, that neither were the Assembly asleep, nor its partisans in the metropolis, nor the daring and bad men that are always afloat and prepared for mischief in every great metropolis.

In the first place, the soldiery, by mixing with the populace of Paris, had become so disorderly, that it had been necessary to confine them in their barracks; at last eleven of them were picked out and sent to the prison of the Abbaye, till they could be tried by a court-martial. But you will see in the history that the gates were broken open by the populace, and these victims of their patriotism, so they voted themselves, were rescued. In their return from the prison the mob was met by a troop of dragoons and another of hussars, who in

short at last joined the crowd in their cry of *Vive la nation!*

It was then determined to send a deputation to the National Assembly in favour of the prisoners.

This was done; an address was presented to the king; and the soldiers, having been first returned to the prison as a necessary formality, were by his order set at liberty.

This was but an ominous specimen of the soldiery and of the populace to those who were intending to overpower the one by means of the other.

Other particulars of this kind you will see in the history.

With respect to the Assembly, on the 8th of July (this affair of the eleven soldiers had taken place about the 1st) they were addressed by Mirabeau in one of his most celebrated speeches, and this speech was followed by a sort of remonstrance addressed to the king on the subject of the troops that had been brought around them; and both of these documents you will read with great attention, not only as specimens of the powers of this extraordinary man, on a very difficult and important occasion, but as forming a sort of epoch in the history of this great event.

"Nevertheless," said Mirabeau, in the course of his speech, "what hath been the issue of those declarations and of our respectful behaviour? Already are we surrounded by a multitude of soldiers; more are arrived, are arriving every day; they are hastening hither from all quarters; thirty-five thousand men are already cantoned in Paris and Versailles, twenty thousand more are expected; they are followed by trains of artillery; spots are marked out for batteries; every communication is secured, every pass is blocked up; our streets, our bridges, our public walks, are converted into military stations; events of public notoriety, concealed facts, secret orders, precipitate counter-orders—in a word, preparations for war, strike every eye, and fill every heart with indignation."

The speech grows more and more violent as it proceeds, and was followed by the celebrated address to the king for the removal of the troops, which you will of course read with attention. A few sentences from it may serve to give you, for the present, a slight idea of it, sufficient for my purpose.

"In the emotions of your own heart, sire, we look for the true safety of the French. When troops advance from every quarter, when camps are forming around us, when the capital is besieged, we ask one another with astonishment, Hath the king distrusted the fidelity of his people? What mean these menacing preparations? Where are the enemies of the state and of the king that are to be subdued? . . . . . The sway of Louis IX., of Louis XII., of Henry IV., is the only sway worthy of you.

"We should deceive you, sire, if, forced as we are by circumstances, we neglected to add, that such a sway is the only one which at the present day it is possible to exercise in France. . . . . Where, then, our enemies will affect to say, is the danger to be apprehended from the soldiery?

"The danger, sire, is urgent, is universal, is beyond all the calculations of human prudence.

"The danger is for the provinces. Should they once be alarmed for our liberty, we should no longer have it in our power to restrain their impetuosity," &c. &c.

"The danger is for the capital. With what sensations will the people, in their state of indigence, and tortured with the keenest anguish, see the relics of its subsistence disputed for by a throng of threatening soldiers," &c. &c.

"The danger is for the troops. They may forget that the ceremony of enlisting made them soldiers, and recollect that nature made them men.

"The danger, sire, menaces those labours which are our primary duty, and which will only obtain their full success and a real permanency as long as the people considers the Assembly as altogether free.

"The danger, sire, is yet more terrible; and judge of its extent, by the alarms which bring us before you. Mighty revolutions have arisen from causes far less striking. . . . . .

"Sire! we conjure you in the name of our country, in the name of your own happiness and your own glory, to send back your soldiers to the posts from which your counsellors have drawn them—send back that artillery," &c. &c.

These few extracts may be sufficient to afford you, for the present, some general notion of what you will here-

after read; as may the following extracts of the answer of the king:—

"No person is ignorant," replied the king, "of the disorders and the scandalous scenes which have been acted and repeated at Paris and Versailles, before my eyes and before the eyes of the States General; it is necessary that I should make use of the means which are in my power to restore and maintain order in the capital and the environs; it is one of my principal duties to watch over the public safety: these were the motives which determined me to assemble the troops round Paris," &c. &c.

"If, however, the needful presence of the troops in the neighbourhood of Paris still gives umbrage, I am ready, at the desire of the Assembly, to transfer the States General to Noyon or to Soissons, and shall then repair to Compiegne, in order to maintain the communication which ought to subsist between the Assembly and myself."

This answer met with some applause, but not with the applause of Mirabeau.

"The king's answer," he said, "is a downright refusal."

"We have requested the dismissal of the troops; we have not asked leave to run away from the troops, but merely desired that the troops should be at a distance from the capital," &c. &c.

The king's answer was given on the 11th; on that day M. Necker was dismissed. On the 12th the new ministers, Breteuil, Broglio, &c., took their seats in the council; but on the 13th the Assembly decreed that Necker and the dismissed ministers were regretted by the Assembly; that the advisers of his majesty, of what rank and station soever, were personally responsible for the troubles then existing, and for all those which might ensue.

On the 14th the Bastille was taken, and on the 15th the Assembly at Versailles, which had been sitting night and day since the morning of the 13th, and had already sent two deputations to the king, on the subject of the troops, in vain, were prevented from sending a third by the appearance of the king *himself*, to announce to them that he had just ordered the troops to remove from Paris and Versailles, and that all was to be now a system of confidence and peace.

So rapid was the course of these most memorable events.

I must allude to them a little longer, that you may bear away from the lecture a distinct impression of them.

The dismissal of Necker happened on the 11th, and this was followed by the immediate appointment of a new administration, at the head of which were M. de Breteuil and Marshal Broglio. This was the first event.

It was impossible that this should not cause the greatest alarm and indignation.

Paris was filled with consternation. The busts of Necker and the Duke of Orleans were paraded through the city, covered with crape. A party of dragoons was ordered to attack the multitude. The Prince de Lambesc was at the head of a body of foreign cavalry; stones were thrown, a charge made, people wounded, the populace cried "to arms," the alarm-bells were sounded, the armourers' shops broken open; but, above all, many of the French guards left their barracks to join the people, and the foreign cavalry were obliged to give way; and, on the whole, it appeared, judging from this first experiment, that the Parisian populace were not likely to be much restrained or kept down by the military force of the crown.

This was the second event; but it gave occasion, in conjunction with the increasing terrors and expectation of an attack from Broglio, for a third; and the most important event of all, which was no other than the sudden rise and appearance of forty-eight thousand men in arms, the citizens of Paris, followed immediately afterwards in the provinces by similar bodies of volunteers, so that on a sudden all the regular forces of the crown seemed surrounded, kept in check, and in fact taken prisoners, by the whole effective population of this great kingdom; and all the real power of the monarch, the power, at least, by which he was to defend the prerogatives of his crown and the claims of the privileged orders, in opposition to the will of the National Assembly, at once annihilated.

This was the great result. You will see the particulars in the histories.

The insurrectionary movements of the populace in Paris, the forcing of the Hospital of Invalids, where thirty thousand

muskets were found; the assault and even destruction of the fortress of the Bastile; the disgusting outrages, the bloody exhibitions that ensued: all this happened at Paris on the 14th; while, on the morning of the 15th, the Assembly at Versailles were still drawing up representations to the king, who seems, from some lamentable want of character, or from the effect of that system of deception and flattery which is so practised in the courts and chambers of princes, never actually to have known the dangerous situation in which his crown and dignity were placed, and the astonishing scenes of popular violence, still more the decisive exertions of public spirit, which his capital had exhibited.

One honourable man, one faithful friend to the monarchy and to the liberties of the country, was at last found, the Duc de Liancourt. In the middle of the night of the 14th he made his way into the king's chamber, and disclosed at once all the melancholy truths which had come to his own knowledge, and in a total ignorance of which the king slumbered on, as if he was ever to know repose again.

"It is a revolt," said the king. "It is a revolution, sire!" said the duke.

It was indeed a revolution, to which now no further opposition could be made; and the measure adopted by the king was the only one that could be now advised.

He repaired in the morning to the Assembly, which, as I have mentioned, had been sitting two days and two nights; repaired to them without pomp, almost without attendants, and in the plainest dress: standing, and uncovered, he addressed them in the most conciliatory terms; professed his sorrow for the disorders at Paris, his regard for the Assembly, and ended by declaring that he had ordered the troops to remove from the neighbourhood of the capital.

It must be mentioned, to the honour of the Assembly, that this effort of the king to regain the affection of his people was not made in vain. This Assembly was, after all, an Assembly, where men of character, and rank, and education, and feeling, were to be found,—far removed above the level of those Assemblies that succeeded.

The hall resounded with shouts of applause. As he withdrew, they surrounded him in a respectful manner, attended

him to his palace, and a deputation of eighty-four of the most distinguished of them were sent to Paris to conciliate the minds of the citizens, to place the conduct of the king in the least unfavourable point of view, and to assure them of his wishes for the happiness of the people. From the Hotel de Ville the deputies were conducted to the church of Notre Dame, and Te Deum was performed for the happy agreement between the king and the national representatives, and for the public prosperity which was expected to be the consequence.

More still remained. You will see, in the history, that the offensive ministry is dismissed, Necker recalled, and contrary to the wish, and to the great terror of the queen and court, the king actually repairs to the town house of Paris, and appears with the national cockade in his hat, to render his reconciliation with its inhabitants and his acceptance of the Revolution more public and more complete.

Such was the end of the great monarchy of France, and such is, I conceive, in a few words, a fair general account of this astonishing Revolution, this appalling spectacle of the instability of every thing human.

But it is necessary, before I conclude, that I should remind you of what I have already mentioned, that there are two different accounts or explanations given of these memorable events, and that you are not to accede to the representation I have just given without due examination of one of a totally opposite nature.

Some assert, not what I have stated, that an unseasonable, ill-conducted, and on the whole unjust attempt, was made by the court to put down the National Assembly, to control the new opinions by military force, and to destroy ultimately the liberties of France; but, on the contrary, that the court intended nothing of the kind, that the court only wished to assert the proper authority of the king as guardian of the public peace, to repress the licentiousness of Paris, to counteract the factious or even republican designs of furious and bad men, and to save the National Assembly itself from being overawed by the populace; that this populace, amid the real miseries of a scarcity, were exposed without bread to all the inflammatory representations of the orators of the Palais

Royal—orators that were never for a moment quiet, imputing all the evils that were suffered to the fault of the government, to the court, to foreigners, to foreign troops, and to those they called by the general name of traitors in and out of the walls of Paris.

This is the great question before the student, at this most important part of the history of the Revolution. My own view of it is what I have given, fortified by the direct evidence of Necker, and supported, as I conceive, by all the probabilities of the case in its different stages.

But you must judge for yourselves; and, in my next lecture, I will endeavour to exhibit to you what may be considered as the case of the court.

# LECTURE XI.

## FOURTEENTH OF JULY.

IN the course of my last lecture I alluded to the great crisis in the history of this Revolution, the production of military force by the court—the production rather than the employment of it; the astonishing effects by which this menace was almost instantly followed, the sudden rise of a citizen army in Paris, the taking of the Bastile on the 14th, the visit of the king to the National Assembly, afterwards to Paris, and his public and avowed adoption of the Revolution in the presence of his people.

I then mentioned the different explanations that have been given of this sort of appeal on the part of the king and court to military force: the two explanations are quite at variance with each other; and having adopted one of them myself, and proposed it to your consideration, I told you, at the close of my lecture, that it was fitting I should exhibit to you the other, and that this I would do to-day, by laying before you various passages from different authors, those who think well of the intentions of the court.

I will just mention, before I refer to these books (as the extracts are desultory, and not always sufficiently distinct), that the court-party contend, in opposition to such views of the case as I have hitherto described to you, that it was necessary to produce the troops to awe and to restrain the disorderly and mutinous populace of Paris, and that no counter-revolution was intended.

You will observe, however, that in Paris the interpretation of this approach of the troops was, that the city was to be besieged and starved into submission, and even, if necessary, given up to military execution; and that it was under the terror of such calamities that the demagogues raised an in-

surrection of the populace and stormed the Bastile; and that the more regular inhabitants formed themselves into a company of volunteers, forty thousand strong, to defend themselves and the capital from Marshal Broglio and his troops.

These are the terrors and alarms on each side, and these the transactions that occasioned all the confusion and uncertainty of mind and purpose in the parties, which you will see alluded to in the extracts which I shall bring forward from different writers; the National Assembly, who were sitting at Versailles, never knowing what was passing at Paris, nor they at Paris what was doing in the Assembly and the palace.

But to proceed. The first author I shall allude to is Marmontel. Marmontel was a man of letters, who resided in Paris at this period; a successful writer, and of an amiable and elegant mind. His Memoirs have been published: they were much read and admired when they first came out, and in the latter part of them you will find an account of the whole Revolution, rapid and concise, but perfectly entitled to your consideration.

He was for some time an eyewitness, and even took a part in it. He was at length happy to retire and to die in silence and obscurity. Having, in the course of his Memoirs, proceeded through the earlier stages of the Revolution, he at last arrives at the scenes that took place in Paris, such as I have slightly described, immediately after the royal sitting of the 23rd.

And then more immediately, in allusion to our present subject, he says, p. 158:—"The adventure of the two soldiers of the guards, the spirit of insubordination with which the people inspired them, the audacity of this people, the tone it had assumed, &c. &c., had been forcibly seized upon in the council, as means to persuade the king, that the greatest of evils, both for the state and for himself, would be, to suffer the authority which he held in his hands to be despised, and that it would infallibly be despised, if it were seen disarmed. It was represented to the king, according to Marmontel—and this is very probable—that the multitude must tremble, or it would make all tremble; that it would have been desirable, without doubt, that the sessions of the States should have

passed in complete security, without having around them any display of military force; but that so long as the people came to mix insult and menace with the deliberations of the States General, public force had a right to arm itself in order to repress it."

"There are those," it was observed to the king, "who think they can appease the populace as easily as they irritate it. After they have made it serve their purpose of subverting the whole kingdom, they will want to bring the tiger back to his cage, but it will be too late; the ferocious beast will have felt his own force and the weakness of his chains: above all, what will he be, if he has tasted blood? Teach this people then, that in your hands it has still justice to dread.

"If the members of the National Association had all your loyalty, sire, they would all unite to demand, around the sanctuary of legislation, some impenetrable barrier, inaccessible to the troops on one side and to the people on the other, and then all would be equal. But no; it is in order to leave to this populace full licence and complete impunity, that they wish the troops to be withdrawn. . . . . .

"It is by the people that they seek to reign: the name of liberty, which for the populace means only licence, has resounded like a general signal of insurrection and anarchy.

"Independence, and contempt for every species of authority, this is what the face of the kingdom presents; and it is on the ruins of the monarchy, and with its wrecks, that the revolutionary faction boasts of creating a democratic empire. It is a vile mass of vagabonds, without morals, without employment, without home, that is called the sovereign people . . . . .

"No, sire, it is no longer in the name of the clergy or of the nobility, it is in the name of a good people, of which you are the father, that we conjure you not to abandon it to the most cruel of tyrannies—to that of the populace and of its perfidious leaders."

"It is thus," says Marmontel, "that the king was persuaded, that in displaying to the people a military power, he should only repress force by force, and should leave public liberty protected and uninjured."

And here we may observe, that it is very probable, that it

is very certain, that the king was addressed in the manner Marmontel describes. Many questions, however, and difficulties remain, both of prudence and honour, such as I have endeavoured to submit to your consideration, with respect to the advice itself and the acceptance of it; the time, the occasion, the circumstances, under which the king was placed, the quantity of the force produced, the style and manner of it, the natural interpretation of it in the community.

Marmontel opens the next book with a statement of the incapacity of the ministers. "The king then," he says, "ordered some troops to advance; but in forming a vigorous resolution, the ministers should have foreseen its consequences, the difficulties, the dangers.

"But they calculated nothing, they provided for nothing; they did not even think of securing the troops from the corruption of the populace of Paris. . . . . And in the Faux-bourgs of Paris, the only imposing post, the Bastile, was neither furnished with a sufficient garrison, nor with provisions to support the few soldiers who were there. . . . .

"To this species of stupor into which the court and council had fallen, the adverse party opposed," he continues, "a measured, progressive, and constant march, proceeding from post to post towards dominion, without ever losing a moment or retrograding a step. Resolved to suffer no collection of troops, either around Paris or Versailles, this party determined on an address to the king," &c. &c.

He then goes on to describe Mirabeau's address to the king, Mirabeau himself, the king's answer, the necessity of a new system, and the consequent necessity of the dismissal of Necker, and the scenes that followed—the scenes that I have already described to you.

"Thus Paris," he at last observes, "without courts of justice, without police, without a guard, at the mercy of one hundred thousand men, who were wandering wildly in the middle of the night, and for the most part wanting bread, believed itself on the point of being besieged from without and pillaged from within; believed that twenty-five thousand soldiers were posted around to blockade it and cut off all supplies of provisions, and that it would be a prey to a starving populace."

"Such was the terrible picture which, in the night between the 12th and 13th of July, was present to every fancy."

Marmontel then goes on to describe the events that followed in a manner very animated and striking. "If the National Assembly," he at last observes, "could have had any presentiment of the evils with which the kingdom was threatened by this dreadful anarchy; if it had foreseen how impotent its own efforts would be, to force back into the bonds of legitimate authority this ferocious beast which it was eager to unchain; if those who flattered it had thought that they themselves might perhaps one day be its prey, they would have shuddered with a salutary fear. But to procure for themselves a reigning authority, they only thought of disarming that which alone could have saved all."

Again,—"A blockade," he says, "a siege, a famine, a masacre, were the black phantoms which had been employed to frighten the Parisians; and in seeing the troops retire, that were supposed to be charged with the commission of these crimes, Paris thought it had nothing more to fear. It was under the eyes of six Swiss battalions and of eight hundred horse, all motionless in their camp, that the Hotel des Invalides was opened to the people—a very positive proof, as Bezenval, who was in command at the moment, has since affirmed it to be, that the troops were forbidden to fire on the citizens; and *there*," says Marmontel, "was the great advantage of the people; they knew that the king would only suffer them to be curbed, without ever consenting that they should either be treated as enemies or rebels."

"It is true," says Marmontel, "that if the governor of the Bastile had made use of his artillery, he would have struck Paris with awe." He recollected, without doubt, that he served a good king, and among the people every man knew it as well as he. All Paris had hastened toward the Bastile. Sexes and ages, all were confounded around those ramparts that were loaded with cannon; what is it then that heartened them? "The king consents that his people should be threatened, but not that his people should be crushed."

These sentences, and sometimes half sentences, which I have extracted from Marmontel, will give you some general notion of the view he took of these extraordinary scenes. He

was, as I have already mentioned, a distinguished man of letters, lived at the time, and you will of course read what he has written, with curiosity, as I hope, and with care.

His Memoirs, he says, are not a history of the Revolution; they are addressed to his children, and they are rather meant to give a history of himself; but as he concludes, he observes, "The events which I have just recalled to my memory have so occupied my fancy, that amid so many public calamities I have almost forgotten myself; the impression which this mass of misery made on me was, indeed, so lively and so deep, that it was very natural, that what only concerned myself should have been very often forgotten."

"If the life of man," he says, "be a journey, can I recount mine, without telling through what events and by what torrents, what abysses, what wilds, peopled by tigers and by serpents, it has passed? It is thus that I retrace to myself our ten years of misfortunes, almost doubting whether it be not a violent and fatal dream." He died on the 31st of December, 1799.

It is probable, that in these memoirs of Marmontel may be seen such sentiments and opinions as would have passed through the student's own mind, if of gentle nature, and if intelligent, and an eyewitness at the time; and this must constitute the interest and value of the perusal of them. I will now refer to the memoirs of Bertrand de Moleville; they must be attentively perused by the student, who cannot be better employed, than in comparing the opposite representations of men of different characters and views, and in endeavouring to form a right judgment on the whole. Such opposite accounts become, after the events, a sort of representation of what was the real scene actually in existence, amidst the contending passions and opinions of which, the student would have had to decide, if he had been a statesman or a man of influence himself at the time. And similar collisions he will always have to witness, when large masses of mankind are put into a state of agitation; and it is in the midst of the embarrassments of such perplexing and contradictory circumstances and representations, that men of education are to learn to judge of any scene that may hereafter be placed before them in real life, and may thus be enabled, by the

remembrance of what history has shown them, and by the exercise of their good feelings, and good sense, and superior information, to influence the conduct of those around them at the hour of need, and do good to their fellow creatures on occasions the most difficult and important.

The view that Bertrand de Moleville takes of the transactions we have been adverting to is much the same; that the metropolis had become disorderly and seditious, and that it was necessary to march up troops from all quarters to preserve the peace of the community. That the attempt was not on the part of the court to destroy the Assembly, but on the part of the democratic leaders in and out of the Assembly, by means of the populace, to overthrow all the legitimate authority of the king, at the same time with an intention to make the Duke of Orleans lieutenant governor of the kingdom.

I must observe to you, before I proceed further to allude to the opinions of Bertrand de Moleville, either now or at any other time, that I give them to you as opinions that were held by the patrons of the old régime, not as necessarily true. Bertrand writes in 1799, from his lodgings in London, and describes what he had himself seen and known, and what he had understood from those on whom he was confident he could depend. He was a man of character and veracity, and a man of ability: his facts, however, are one thing, and his opinions another; the former may be (insensibly to the writer himself) affected by the other; still more so, whenever they are given, not on his own authority, but on the authority of others. He was called to the ministry, not because he was a friend to moderate opinions, and a friend to a mixed and constitutional government, but because he was a man of daring character, and of considerable resource, in all those minor expedients, by which the court were at the time endeavouring to tide the torrent. His counter police, of which you will see an account in his Memoirs, cost very large sums, and answered, probably, little or no purpose. He was a man that would have brought back the old régime without the slightest compunction; nor would he have hesitated, if necessary, to adopt measures of the most arbitrary character. No one cared less for constitutional principles. Still, as a man of character and ability, and of eminence at the time, his senti-

ments and opinions must be considered. He is one of a class; they form part of the general case; a part that at every period must be duly estimated.

I will now allude to his view of the scenes, and the crisis before us.

After a variety of details and observations, which you will attentively read, he reaches the subject of the dismissal of Necker. This is, evidently, a very curious part of it; and, as I conceive, in itself and alone, decisive of the whole question of the intentions of the court.

With regard, then, to Necker, he observes: "It is certain, that all the parties labouring to subvert the monarchy, or at least to change the nature of it, depended upon the support or on the indulgence of that minister, and that the staunch royalists had no reliance upon him. These motives at length determined the king to remove him."

This is his explanation, short and clear, but surely not satisfactory. He then gives a description of the effect produced in Paris by this certainly very alarming measure. His picture of the state of that capital on the 12th of July is most appalling: it was on that day that M. Necker's departure was known. He describes the manner in which Camille Desmoulins, one of the demagogues, mounting upon a table in the Palais Royal, cried out, "Citizens, there is not a moment to be lost; M. Necker is dismissed; this dismission is the alarm bell for another St. Bartholomew of patriots. To-night all the Swiss and German battalions will come from the Champ de Mars and cut our throats," &c. &c.

The parading of the busts of the Duke of Orleans and M. Necker is then described by Moleville; the affair of the Prince de Lambesc. "It would be difficult," he goes on to say, "to paint the disorder, fermentation, and alarm, that prevailed in the capital during this dreadful day: a city taken by storm and delivered up to the soldiers' fury, could not present a more dreadful picture. Imagine detachments of cavalry and dragoons making their way through different parts of the town at full gallop to the posts assigned them; trains of artillery rolling over the pavement with a monstrous noise; bands of ill armed ruffians, and women, drunk with brandy, running through the streets like furies, breaking the shops

open, and spreading terror every where by their howlings, mingled with frequent reports from guns or pistols fired in the air; all the barriers on fire; thousands of smugglers taking advantage of the tumult to hurry in their goods; the alarm bell ringing in almost all the churches; a great part of the citizens shutting themselves up at home, loading their guns, and burying their money, papers, and valuable effects in cellars and gardens; and, during the night, the town paraded by numerous patrols of citizens of every class, and even of both sexes; for many women were seen with muskets or pikes upon their shoulders."

"Such," he says, "is the exact picture of the state of Paris on the 12th of July."

"At Versailles," he says, "the new ministry were busily debating sometimes in the council, sometimes in committees, without knowing what resolution to take; the general officers were constantly going for orders, were made to wait long, and received none at last," &c.

"The king," he observes, "could not have dismissed M. Necker at a more critical juncture, than that in which the people, alarmed with famine, fixed all their hopes on the attentions of that minister, and on the credit and resources they attributed to him."

"The Revolution," he says, "though in its cradle at the time, assumed one of its distinguishing characters; the Parisians in arming the populace and ruffians, in order to oppose them to the troops of the line, were anxious to anticipate a danger with which they were *not* threatened, and thought nothing of that, arising from putting the public force into the hands of those, who, on the contrary, should always be awed by it. The consequence was, that the next day, July 13th, at three in the morning, an immense crowd armed with clubs, bludgeons, and pikes, under pretence of the dearth of provisions, attacked the Convent of St. Lazarus, crying out, "Bread, bread!" They then demanded arms," &c.

He afterwards describes the manner in which the populace forced the doors of the *garde meuble*, carrying off all the rich and curious arms there deposited; then the forcing of the prisons of La Force, and the inaction of the minister, M. de Bezenval, who had troops at his disposal without once em-

ploying them while all these enormities were committing; and then at last the manner in which a Parisian bourgeois militia was formed, provisionally settled at forty-eight thousand men.

"The promptness," he observes, "with which the Parisians organized at once this provisional magistracy, the bourgeois militia, and the sixty district assemblies, has been made too much a wonder. To M. Necker's imprudence belongs the honour of this melancholy miracle, without which, the city of Paris would have been under the necessity of submitting to the king's authority, and of imploring his protection against the plunderers. It was the innovating genius of that minister which engendered that electoral assembly, and that division of the capital into sixty districts or rounds for the appointment of their respective electors; without reflecting, that in so immense a city as Paris, where the populace is too numerous not to be turbulent, it is always very dangerous to establish or point out to the people a settled place of assembling in each quarter; it is removing the greatest obstacle to a general insurrection. It was thus that this modern patchwork of an electoral assembly, and assemblies of districts, devised for the appointment of deputies to the States General, became the corner stone of the Revolution."

Bertrand goes on to describe the exertions made by the populace, to provide themselves with arms; the attack on the Bastile, of which he gives a more intelligible detail than will be easily found elsewhere. He enumerates the terrible atrocities that followed, nor can on this subject his natural indignation be too great.

He next turns to the king and the National Assembly. "It was late at night, on the 14th of July, before the Assembly were informed of a part of the outrages committed at Paris. . . . . The king was not better informed." . . . . He then describes the deputations of the Assembly, and the answers of the king on the subject of the troops.

"Can it be conceived," he at last observes, "that, during an insurrection, in which the people armed and constantly committing acts of violence, were every where but feebly resisted by the troops, the removal of these could have been considered and solicited by the Assembly, as the only

means of suppressing the insurrection and preventing new ones?"

"But it was too clear," says he, "that they neither wished to suppress the insurrection nor prevent new ones, but to ensure the triumph of the rebels."

"The night of the 14th of July," he says, "was another night of anxiety and horror for the Parisians. Terrified at the enormity of their crimes, and particularly dreading the exemplary punishment they deserved, they firmly believed all the projects of vengeance with which the king was charged, and were in constant expectation of the bombardment of the capital or the arrival of squadrons upon squadrons of hussars," &c.

"When it was known that nothing had passed at Versailles, and that the Assembly continued to hold their sittings unmolested, it was rumoured that the project of the ministers had failed, because the cannoniers, commanded by M. Broglio, had refused to obey him. The fact was, that M. Broglio had proposed to escort the king and royal family safely to Metz with the army, and that his majesty, instead of adopting this measure, which might have saved every thing, had determined, from the representations and entreaties of the Duke of Liancourt, to throw himself confidently upon the Assembly, and to consent to all they asked."

He then describes what passed between the Assembly and the king, and concludes this part of his subject in the following manner:—

"Thus terminated that memorable sitting, in which Louis XVI., ever impelled by his fatal reliance on the love and allegiance of the French, voluntarily stripped himself of all the means of supporting his authority, at a moment when the most powerful would scarcely have been sufficient to preserve it. He chose rather to leave his throne, without support, to the mercy of all the factious, who wished to overthrow it; and his own person, without defence, to the discretion of a people, armed and delirious, than to shed the blood of any one of his subjects."

Such are the representations of Bertrand de Moleville, at every point different from what I conceive to be reasonable and fair, except his account of the feelings of the king.

The want of character in the king was, no doubt, in itself fatal to all the views of the followers of the old régime; but this want of character was known, and should have been taken into their calculation, and materially influenced their measures.

That their measures would have been a trial of force and a dissolution of the Assembly seems sufficiently clear, even from the general tone of these passages, taken from Bertrand de Moleville, but from what is now known of Paris, and the prevalence of the new opinions, the result must have been a civil war; nor do I deny, but rather I contend, that these sentiments in the court and its adherents, and the probable chance of a civil war, were the natural consequences of the first strong measures of the patriotic party on the opening of the States. They certainly were; and they constitute, what I conceive, and what I have represented to be, the very objectionable nature of their proceedings.

But to return to the subject before us.

You see what were the representations of Bertrand de Moleville.

I will now allude to what were the sentiments at the time of Mirabeau. In this, as in the former case, the sentiments given are not necessarily just. Mirabeau is an orator, a rhetorician, not a philosopher or an historian; but he too is a sort of representative of a class. His address of the 16th of July, to which I shall now allude, was applauded by the National Assembly, and was to have been presented to the king. It is quite clear what were the real opinions of the more eminent and efficient leaders of the Constituent Assembly at the time, and their opinions must be considered as of great weight at such a moment—eyewitnesses and actors in the scene. "It is a matter of certainty," says the address, "that only for those perfidious counsels, the troops, which your majesty has condescended to dismiss, would never have been summoned hither.

"Sire! whither did they pretend to lead you? What was the object of that fatal plan which they had the audacity to meditate? There is not one of us who can doubt that they proposed to disperse the National Assembly, and even lay their sacrilegious hands on the representatives of the nation," &c. &c.

After many strong observations, he concluded—"We pretend not to dictate to you the choice of your ministers: they ought to be such as please you; but, sire, when you come to consider the fatal course into which your advisers would have seduced you; when you reflect on the discontent of the capital, which they besieged, and would have starved—on the blood with which they drenched it—on the horrors, which can be imputed to themselves alone—all Europe will think you clement if you deign to pardon them."

Such are passages in the address. Mirabeau afterwards, in one of his letters to his constituents (the 19th), speaking of the scenes to which we have alluded, thus expresses himself:—

"So many extraordinary changes," he says,—"the capital passing from despotism to liberty; from the most extreme terror to a state of the most perfect tranquillity; a militia of citizens established; the Bastile taken by assault; a conspiracy averted; perverse counsellors dissipated and dispersed; a powerful faction obliged to fly; ministers that were clandestinely exiled, recalled in triumph; their successors preventing their ignominy by a sudden retirement; the king, whom they had deceived, restoring to us his confidence, and demanding a return of ours; coming to show himself to his people, to collect the public interests, and to assure us that he is entirely ours;—all these events, astonishing in themselves, and, from their rapidity, almost incredible, will never remain barren or without producing effects, and those effects are not to be calculated."

In an earlier part of the same letter, alluding to the excesses of the populace, "How many," says he, "were the causes that prepared the materials of this explosion! Ministers, that were dear to the people, exiled; those that were marked by the public scorn, brought forward to replace them; the sanctuary of the laws profaned; the National Assembly menaced; foreign troops; artillery; the capital besieged or invaded; the preparations of a civil war—what did I say?—of a horrible butchery, where all the friends of the people, known or supposed, were to fall, surprised and without arms, under the swords of the soldiery; and two centuries, in short, of oppression, public and private, political and

fiscal, feudal and judicial, were to be crowned by the most horrible conspiracy which the annals of the world have ever displayed. Such are the provocations of the people. Terrible indeed is the rage of the people; but the cold-bloodedness of despotism is atrocious, and its systematic cruelties make more men miserable in a single day, than are destroyed by the vengeance of popular insurrections in years."

Such were the different views that were taken of these memorable scenes at the time by those who were eye-witnesses and actors in them.

I will now allude to a publication that appeared about this time, under the name of Groenvelt.

I was struck with the good sense of the author. He writes as an eye-witness. I always suspected that he was some Englishman then at Paris, and from information I have subsequently received, I believe that he was one, afterwards much distinguished and admired among our public men.*

After alluding to the affair of the imprisoned soldiers, &c. &c., he proceeds thus, writing on the 7th of July:—"This town of Versailles wears in every part a military appearance, and one cannot stir a step without being struck with the idea, how ill these preparations of war can be reconciled with free debate; but what alarms men still more is the nomination of Marshal Broglio," &c. &c.

But Groenvelt then adds—"It is impossible for any one in his senses to believe, that the slight tumults at Paris and Versailles are the real cause, though they may be the pretext, for drawing together so great an army; those insurrections were completely quelled before these preparations were made," &c. &c.

"Indeed I cannot but suspect that some great event is at hand, and that the king will not abandon the declarations which he made at the royal session (of the 23rd) without some attempt to enforce them.

"The disposition of the army, however, appears every day more favourable to the people," &c. &c.

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* Not so: Sir S. Romilly was only the translator of the work; the author was Dumont.

This he writes on the 7th of July, a week before the Revolution of the 14th.

On the Saturday afterwards, on the 11th of July, "I went," he says, "to Paris, where I found, to my astonishment, that though the troops were collecting on every side, the king's answer had produced such a degree of security in people's minds, as had at least banished all idea of any immediate danger; every body looked up to the National Assembly; and if no danger was apprehended *there*, none, it was supposed, *ought* to be apprehended.

"The next day news arrived at the Palais Royal, that Necker was out of office. . . . . The people were extremely agitated; at length grief and indignation became universal. . . . . All the theatres were immediately shut. . . . . The bust of Necker was carried about the streets, covered with a crape.

"The Prince de Lambesc, at the head of a troop of foreign soldiers, galloped amidst a multitude in the garden of the Tuileries." . . . . "A general alarm was given, the bells rung. The inhabitants, who had been, as usual on a Sunday, amusing themselves in the environs of the city, hurried home; others armed themselves, crying out that the city was to be sacked with fire and sword that very night. The night (the night of the 12th) was terrible," &c. &c.

"On the Monday (the 13th) the appearance of the capital seemed perfectly miraculous. In a single day a municipal commonwealth was established, and an army set on foot. One would have thought that the six hundred thousand inhabitants of Paris had been all animated with one soul. All passions were absorbed in one, the love of liberty; all objects were neglected but the public safety." . . . . "In a single day more than forty thousand men had enlisted themselves," &c. &c.

These extracts will enable you to judge of the general manner of Groenvelt.

"Not foreseeing," he says, "all that was to happen at Paris, I hastened back to Versailles on the evening of Monday, that I might observe the unequal contest that was to take place between the dark and insidious policy of a court faction, and the frank and ingenuous courage of a popular assembly.

He then goes on to describe the addresses and replies that passed between the king and the Assembly on the subject of the troops; the ignorance in which the king was kept of the real state of Paris; his imperious and inauspicious answer (such it appeared to Groenvelt); and the consequent resolutions voted by the Assembly, "that Necker was regretted, the present ministers responsible," &c. &c.

"In this alarming situation," he proceeds to say, "the Assembly resolved not to adjourn during the night. They dreaded every moment receiving the news that an attack was made on Paris by the army, and they were apprehensive that some of their own members might be carried away clandestinely. A report was circulated to that effect; the Abbé Sieyes, Mirabeau, &c. were named. No business was proceeded on during the night, but the Assembly sat, prepared for whatever might be the event.

"The next day, the 14th of July (a day ever memorable), the Assembly resumed its proceedings, but in a state of the most perplexing anxiety. The more imminent the danger which threatened the intended constitution, the more important did it seem to proceed to its establishment." . . . . They appointed a committee to draw up and report to them without delay the plan of a constitution.

"But it was in the evening that the spectacle exhibited by the Assembly was truly sublime. I shall not attempt to describe to you," he continues, "the various emotions of joy, grief, and terror, which at different moments agitated those who were merely spectators and strangers in the Assembly. But the expression is improper: we were none of us strangers. For myself, I felt as a Frenchman, because I felt as a man; I waited for the catastrophe in the same state of mind as I should wait for a sentence on which my own life depended. Nothing could be more distracting than our uncertainty concerning the state of Paris, from whence no person was suffered to stir. The Viscount de Noailles, after repeated interruptions, had contrived at last to get away; but the intelligence which he brought served only to quicken our impatience and increase our alarms. He knew that a multitude of people in search of arms had forced their way into the Hospital for Military Invalids; that the Bastile was besieged; that there had been already much bloodshed; that

the troops encamped in the Champ de Mars were expected every moment to march to the relief of that fortress, which could not be effected without deluging all Paris in blood. At this dreadful news the Assembly was penetrated with horror. A number of the members started from their seats by a kind of involuntary impulse, as if determined to hasten to the defence of their fellow citizens; others were for bursting immediately into the king's presence, to remonstrate with him on what had happened—to tell him, 'Behold the fruits of your counsels; hear the cries of your victims; see the destruction which is about to overwhelm your capital; say, are you the king or the murderer of your people?' But these tumultuous emotions gave place to the more temperate measure of sending a numerous deputation to the king, to represent to him the calamities that threatened Paris, and again to conjure him to remove the army.

"A long time elapsed," says Groenvelt, "and the deputation did not return; no one could account for the delay. In the mean time there came a message, that two deputies from the body of electors at Paris desired admittance. They were instantly ordered in; not a breath was heard; every ear was attentive, every eye was strained, every mind was upon the rack. From some unaccountable mistake, it was a long time before the deputies entered. Never was impatience wrought up to a higher pitch; the interval was dreadful: at last the deputies appeared at the bar. 'Having been deputed,' they said, 'by the body of electors of Paris to the Bastile, they had been fired on, and had seen several of their fellow citizens murdered by their side, while a flag of truce was displayed, and they were negotiating with the governor.' . . . . The whole assembly was filled with indignation. A confused cry was heard, 'Revenge,' 'No, justice,' 'Justice on the guilty,' resounded in different parts of the hall. . . . . The king's answer arrived: it was less imperious, but less clear than the former . . . .

"A third deputation was immediately sent. . . . . This new solicitation was as ineffectual as the former, &c. &c."

"This inconceivable perseverance," says Groenvelt, "in so fatal a resolution, convinced many men, that no means of resistance to the faction of the court remained but force, and

several deputies, whom I talked with during the night, considered a civil war as inevitable."

Groenvelt then proceeds to describe, which he does in a very animated manner, the scenes that followed: the deputation to the king that was once more proposed, the speech of Mirabeau—and at last the turn of the whole—the appearance of the king in the assembly, &c. &c., the speech, the applauses, &c. &c.

"I have heard it observed," he afterwards says, "that the king deserved all this enthusiastic popularity at a moment when he came to save the nation. He did save it, it is true, but from whom? Who had brought it into danger? Who was the enemy that threatened it? Was it not in the king's own council, or perhaps in his own heart, that the plot was formed? Who but his own favourites, his own ministers, and his own family, were the conspirators? And was he not, till the very moment when he found his own person in danger, inexorable to the prayers and entreaties of the nation?"

This is very unjust to the king; but allowance must be made for the excited feelings of a spectator of the scene.

"I regret very much," he says, "that I was prevented going to Paris on the 15th, when the eighty delegates from the National Assembly arrived there. I should have been very glad to have been present at their reception, to have followed them to the Town House, to the Bastile, and the Cathedral; to have enjoyed the lively emotions of the people, to have sympathized in their happiness, to have caught their enthusiasm, and to have adored the first rays of their rising liberty. I think I should not have had to reproach myself with being a cold or indifferent spectator, or with hearing unmoved, amidst the conquerors of the Bastile, and under their torn banners, that sublime Te Deum which drew tears from the eyes of the whole congregation. A more glorious spectacle surely cannot be conceived, than that of a nation, which has just thrown off its bondage, beginning a new existence, and becoming an example to all the enslaved nations of the earth. It would seem, indeed, that it is at this period that the history of mankind is to commence."

I have produced these passages from Groenvelt for your

consideration. The feelings and opinions of an eyewitness (probably some Englishman) are here before you, and I leave you to convert them, by reflecting upon them, to your own instruction. My own opinions I consider of no importance, and I rather wish to furnish you with the means of forming opinions for yourselves.

"I was impatient," says the same writer, "to see the Bastile, to walk over it, and to enjoy my liberty in its cells and in its dungeons. . . . . When we arrived there we found a great crowd of spectators before it, gazing at the towers, examining the batteries, contemplating the depth of the ditches, and inquiring about the circumstances of the siege. . . . .

"I could not help shuddering, as I passed over the drawbridges which used to be let down to receive the prisoners, and drawn up the moment they had passed. We proceeded into the interior court, which is so narrow, and surrounded by such high walls, that I doubt whether the rays of the sun ever entered it. The whole prison, its dark staircases, its mysterious passages, its triple doors plated with iron and fastened by enormous bolts, its cells, which resembled graves, prepared for the reception of living bodies; its dungeons, gloomy, damp, and unwholesome, with walls eight feet in thickness; the great stone in the midst of each, which served the double purpose of a bed and a chair; the chain in the middle of the stone, which from its thickness seemed intended to bind a wild beast, and not a man; in short, every object that met our eyes inspired us with sentiments of dread and horror. We saw many instruments of torture, the names and the uses of which were entirely unknown to us. Among others, we observed an iron suit of armour, made to press upon all the joints, and to seize, as it were, with one gripe, the knees, the hips, the stomach, the arms, and the neck, of the wretch on whom it was fixed. It may be considered as a precious relic of tyranny. I know that it is a long time since these abominable engines have been used, but they were *once* used; and it is not uninstructive to remember what torments have been invented by slaves to revenge themselves on those who refused to share their slavery, and disdained to partake of the infamy of their honours."

Such is the description, and such the sentiments of Groenvelt.

I produce them, not to excite in you any crude, irrational, and vague hostility against authority, but because it is not uninstructive to see, how cruel man has been and may be; to note the progress of society; to consider what in free countries he now is; to reflect on what are the sources of this improvement; the virtue of those who, though in possession of power, do not abuse it; the merit of those who resist oppression, and who make sacrifices, of whatever kind, for the happiness and advancement of their fellow creatures.

The conquest of this fortress was not, it seems, the result of any preconcerted design, but was achieved by enthusiastic ardour, favoured by accidental good fortune. Some account of this conquest is given by Groenvelt, and some of those particulars mentioned, which may be expected to occur, when the varying passions of the populace are so tremendously excited. A capitulation had been proposed and agreed to, but it was impossible from the confusion to make the capitulation publicly known; at least, it was impossible to stop the multitude, who rushed forward thirsting for victims, whose blood might atone for what had been already shed. The leaders did all they could to disarm the fury of the people, but in vain.

De Launay, the governor, was immediately murdered, and not far from him the major of the Bastile, De Losme Solbay, a man who was worthy of a better fate, for he had proved himself a friend to the unfortunate, while himself in a situation (an officer in the Bastile) not favourable to the milder virtues of the human character. A young man was seen exerting himself in defence of this unfortunate officer, with a degree of strength and courage which seemed perfectly miraculous—miraculous to those who know not the strength and courage that are inspired by the consciousness of a generous cause—though repeatedly struck to the ground, he rose again with redoubled vigour and rushed upon the assassins, but in vain.

This youthful hero, this hero of gratitude and humanity, was the Marquis de Pelleport, who, during an imprisonment of five years, had experienced the kindness of Solbay, and

had come to the attack of the Bastile for the purpose, if possible, of protecting the life of his benefactor.

Other victims were sacrificed: the barbarous cry was, "No forgiveness for traitors."

Flesselles, the first municipal magistrate in Paris, was shot by a pistol, and his bleeding body torn into pieces by a mob who appeared no longer to deserve the common attributes of our nature. The soldiers of the Bastile were with difficulty saved by the French guards, and the bleeding heads of those who had suffered were placed by their murderers on poles. And this was, alas! the triumph that was now to proceed along the streets of the most splendid city of the most civilized portion of the globe.

Some incidents occurred that afford the mind a passing relief amid such scenes of horror.

A young man, by his courage and contrivances, saved the life of his father, then an invalid, and one of those who defended the fortress.

Again,—In the midst of the assault, a young girl was observed in one of the courts. The assailants, who mistook her for the daughter of the governor, were brutal enough to call aloud that they would murder her if the governor did not surrender. Her real father was a witness from the ramparts of this abominable scene, saw that it was his daughter, heard the words of her executioners, and was rushing forward to speak to them and to save her, when he was killed by a musket ball. At this moment, for the honour of human nature, thus debased and fallen, one of the citizens pressed forward, beat down the wretches who had seized on the girl, bore her away in his arms amid the shouts and applauses of many of the spectators, conveyed her to a place of safety, and then returned to the charge.

During all these days of tumult and disorder, none of the people appear to have been actuated by the desire of plunder. Those few who did so appear, were instantly tried, convicted, and hanged by their companions. Money, plate, and jewels, were brought to the Town House by men covered with rags, and the same men seemed at successive moments, now to be debased by the most savage, and now to be elevated by the most disinterested passions of our nature.

Groenvelt afterwards describes the visit of the king to Paris; the waving forest of pikes and bayonets, stretching out for the space of four or five miles, through which he had to pass; the order which every where prevailed; the regular army that, from amidst the citizens of Paris, had started up, as it were, in a single day; the grave and solemn manner in which he was received; the free and spirited harangues at the Town House; the national cockade; the people, to all appearance, unanimously demanding new laws and a new constitution.

"Thus every thing," he at last concludes, "is awed, submissive, and humbled before the nation. The whole difficulty," he says, "which the Assembly can now experience, is in stopping the ravages which may be caused by the overflowing of popular power. That species of difficulty, however," he says, "is neither so great nor so dangerous as those which must have arisen in a perpetual struggle with the faction of the court, in the compromises that must have been made with the existing powers, and in the necessity of only correcting what ought to be totally abolished, and of merely reforming, where every thing was to be created anew."

This opinion pronounced by Groenvelt, was shared at the time by all the friends of freedom; but it is the great question of the whole subject, and this decision must now, I conceive, be considered as wrong. To stop the overflowings of popular power, when the power is really popular, and once triumphant, must now be thought the most invincible of all difficulties. Timely compromises with existing powers, to correct, not totally abolish, to reform, not create anew, must now be deemed the only practical wisdom.

From the day of the royal session (June 23), it is the opinion of Groenvelt, that the court was wholly bent on maintaining the system which it had there avowed. Necker was to be dismissed, and a new ministry named entirely devoted to the court. Breteuil was consulted, it is said; and it was supposed that, with an army of fifty thousand men, it would be an easy thing to overawe Paris, and to govern or dissolve the National Assembly.

"As to the intended siege of Paris, the devoting the city to plunder and conflagration, and a proscription of the members of the Assembly, I consider them," he says, "merely as

the dreams of fear; but at the same time it must be confessed, that the most violent measures, though they had not been coolly premeditated, were not absolutely rejected from the plan which the court adopted; they were thought worth risking in the dreadful hazard that was to be encountered. Such indeed is the common course of human affairs. Nothing more than an extraordinary exertion of authority is at first intended, but the maintenance of that authority, and the necessity of advancing in order not to recede, leads insensibly to the most bloody proscriptions.

"All the measures of the court," he then affirms, "have been false, ill-concerted, ill executed, and marked in every instance with weakness, levity, and infatuation.

"Breteuil and Broglio," he says, "found the king too virtuous, or too feeble, for the execution of their bold designs. If they could have ventured openly to advise him to quit Versailles, to retire to Metz, there to put himself at the head of his army, to have called to his aid religion, the nobility and the parliament, and to have convoked another assembly according to the ancient form, a civil war would have ensued.

"But what," he continues, "would have been the event of it? From the temper of Paris we may judge of the rest of France. The whole nation would have united under the auspices of the Assembly in the common cause of liberty, which would certainly in the end have proved victorious, but not perhaps till after such a series of calamities, as might make it doubtful whether even liberty be worth so great a price."

Such are the opinions and representations of Groenvelt of all he saw and heard, and you have now had those of other writers and eyewitnesses laid before you, in that sort of brief and general manner which I can alone attempt in lectures like these; and when you come to consider these materials for your reflection more attentively, you must judge for yourselves.

You will in the mean time observe, that the National Assembly were quite clear and decided in their sentiments on this occasion, and they certainly considered the court as bringing up the troops, not to maintain the tranquillity of

Paris and the cause of good government, but to dissolve them by force, and to put an end to the Revolution by violence.

On the whole it appears to me, that there can be no doubt that a great design had been formed by the court for the dissolution of the National Assembly, and the assertion of the power of the crown. That military force was to have been produced, and according to the measure of its success would in all probability have been the depression of the spirit of liberty, even of rational liberty, then existing in France.

Less than this cannot well be supposed, much more may be believed.

And such was the notion every where entertained of the arbitrary nature of the old government of France; such were the expectations formed of the National Assembly; such was the fermentation produced in the minds of benevolent and intelligent men, by the example of America and the captivating nature of the new opinions, that such sentiments as I have quoted, even from Mirabeau, were those that prevailed over Europe: and in this country at least, and in all free countries, the fall of the Bastile, and the arming of the French people, with the disappearance of the regular soldiery, were every where celebrated by poets and orators, and considered by all those who loved liberty, and knew its value, as the astonishing but virtuous insurrection of a great people, in assertion of every thing that could do honour to human nature, or give a promise of happiness to succeeding generations.

# LECTURE XII.

## BAILLY.

YOU have been now conducted to a striking point in this great subject of the French Revolution. You have passed through a series of events, that at last transferred the old monarchy of France into the hands of the National Assembly; the old monarchy of France, and even the fate of the monarch himself. Many reasonings and opinions have been proposed to your consideration while you were journeying on to a result like this. I have already mentioned to you several books and memoirs to which you may apply for information.

There are other writers, besides those I have referred to, that deserve your attention; writers that give their opinions on many of the subjects which have now passed in review before you. On these subjects you cannot be too well informed; it is the first stages of this great Revolution that are more particularly instructive. Men are not to be indifferent to one of the noblest of all causes, the cause of liberty; but they are to be very careful how they proceed in the assertion of it. Those who naturally take a part are the young, the high-spirited, the fearless, and the presumptuous. I add the presumptuous, for those who deserve this last epithet will assuredly be mixed, at least, with those of generous and patriotic feelings; nay more, be likely, sooner or later, to take a lead among them; and it is therefore the duty of a lecturer on history to exhibit, if possible, the first reasonings and views of those who interfered in the earlier scenes of a Revolution like this, that every chance may be taken of giving instruction to all who mean well; whether those of the privileged orders, who are to give way for the sake of the common good, or those who are, as patriots, to bring forward their schemes of improvement.

I shall therefore still further direct your attention to the testimonies of those who were actors in the scene; and, at the hazard of appearing tedious to you, I shall proceed to the memoirs of two more, who were members of the Constituent Assembly; they sat on opposite sides, M. Bailly and the Marquis de Ferrieres, and they are on that account of more value to us. I must suppose you now sufficiently familiar with the leading topics, and I shall allude to such passages in their works as I think most worthy of observation.

M. Bailly was one of the most celebrated men of his time. He was a philosopher well known for his writings all over Europe; a person of unblemished character, and of the best intentions; and he saw his country, after he had taken a leading part in her concerns, brought to a state of anarchy and confusion, while he was himself led out to perish on a scaffold. There can be no want of interest in the opinions and views of a man like this. He had been member of the Academy of Sciences, of the Academy of Belles Lettres, of the French Academy; he was member and president of the first National Assembly, and twice mayor of Paris; he was, at the time, in the full maturity and vigour of his intellectual powers: he was put to death at the end of the year 1793, and was then at the age of fifty-seven.

His Memoirs were written in 1792, and he intended to have given the whole of his political life, a period of thirty-one months; but his account terminates in October, 1789, and comprises, therefore, only an interval of about five months and a half; but it is a most memorable interval. He was too good a man to have been admitted to all the secrets of the Revolution, but his book will on that account be only more instructive to all good men like himself. He intends but a journal, and his reader, he says, shall see his heart, and the thoughts of it (such as they were), exhibited before him in all their naked simplicity and truth.

It was on the 29th of December, 1786, when he was dining with the Maréchal de Beauvan, that he first heard the news of the calling together of the Notables. He was struck with it, he says; he thought it a great event; that it would lead to changes, and changes even in the form of government; but certainly he foresaw no Revolution such as afterwards took

place, nor does he conceive (and he is very right) that any one at that time did (December, 1786); but the deplorable state of the finances sufficiently, he thought, justified him in such conjectures as those he made. He then gives a short general view of what passed before the winter of 1788, and he observes: "It was thus, and with arms like these, that men prepared themselves for the States General, and for the recovery of the rights of the nation, and of the Tiers Etat. But if these rights," he adds, "have been recovered, we must not forget, that it is to Necker and to the king that this is owing,—to the minister who proposed, and to the king who consented: both the one and the other have given the means of the regeneration of the empire, a point this that has been sometimes too much forgotten. Despotism is what never entered into the character of the king; he never had any wish but the happiness of his people, and this was the only consideration that could be ever employed as a means of influencing him; and if any acts of authority were to be resorted to, he was never to be persuaded, but by showing him that some good was to be thus attained, or some evil to be avoided; some relief for the nation was to be held out in prospect before him, or the prosperity of the empire, and the happiness of all. I am convinced," continues M. Bailly, "that his authority was never considered by him, nor did he wish to maintain it, but as the best means of supporting and securing the tranquillity and peace of the community. As we are now speaking of the causes," says he, "that produced this regeneration of the country, let us state the first to be the character of Louis XVI.; a king less of a good man, and ministers more adroit, and we should have had no Revolution."

This is a very full, strong, and (coming from M. Bailly) unobjectionable testimony to the merits of the king; to his patriotism, at least, and good intentions; to his moral if not political merits.

At the first sittings of the Assembly of the Electors of Paris, M. Bailly was made, very unexpectedly to himself, deputy to the States General. He was not fit for it, he says: without facility in speaking, and timid to an excess.

"The men of letters," he observes, "did not act a promi-

nent part, but the advocates did; the men connected with the law; distinguished every where by their numbers and their opinions, in the capital, in the bailliages, in the Electoral Assemblies, in the legislative body and the constituent: it is to them that the success of the Revolution is to be attributed." By the success I fear M. Bailly must mean the progress.

You may remember that the lawyers took the same distinguished part in the revolution in America; this on many accounts was to be expected.

"The men of letters," says Bailly, "were far from being popular in the National Assembly. I may say so, for I speak with the exception of myself; and yet men of letters are of all the most enlightened, if not on particular subjects, on subjects in general; they have more exercised their faculties, and know best how to apply them; but they were not numerous enough to make their part good; the trading interest and the advocates were the prevailing descriptions in the Assembly. But there had always been a rivalry between the men of letters and the advocates, though they of all others should have been most united. Power had never been able to shut the mouth of a courageous advocate, and power had always stood in awe of the enlightened minds, and free and fierce language, of distinguished men of letters. Exile and *lettres de cachet* had often been their reward; how was it then that so few of the men of letters took the lead in the Revolution? I must not dissemble, that many of them mixed a little worldly prudence in their politics, and chose to see the side that was likely to prevail. These were, indeed, but the poor creatures of this particular class, but in others of the class the same hesitation may be traced to causes of a more dignified nature. For instance, the philosopher loves liberty, he knows the dignity of man, but he first, and above all, asks for peace. Let the light, he says, expand around him; let humanity recover its rights; but by degrees and without effort. He is in terror of concussions and violent revolutions. The reason is simple: he compares the purchase with the price to be paid. Efforts can only accelerate things; when they are ripened and come to maturity, their very necessity inevitably produces them. If a great people once thinks of liberty, at liberty they must arrive. The time when, the

natural epoch, the philosopher thinks, and wisely thinks, must not be precipitated; his calculations turn only on the more and the less. He would have less rather than more, if that more is to be purchased by public calamities and the shedding of blood. However the men of loftier minds, who vote themselves the only children of liberty, may look down upon, as spurious, those who condescend to consider and calculate; they cannot but allow that such calculations are not altogether unreasonable; and I have always thought, and I think still, that a little more of this sort of philosophic reasoning would have done us no harm in the Constituent Assembly."

Now I must recommend this paragraph that I have quoted to your recollection. You will see, hereafter, that M. Bailly was an assertor of the new opinions, voted and acted with La Fayette and his friends, yet he seems here to have been aware, perhaps too late, that the march of reformers should be slow. Those who love liberty, and who have ardour and talents enough to obtain an audience in their country, should be warned by passages like these, coming from a man like this, of the most undeniable benevolence, and of intelligence the most acknowledged. Principles like those which M. Bailly has here laid down, might have saved the National Assembly and the state. But Bailly immediately subjoins: "Such were my principles; my conduct, indeed, has been that of my duties; my first law was the national will; when the nation was once assembled, I had no other law but that sovereign will."

Principles like these last, on the contrary, which M. Bailly has thus expressed, ruined all. To vote that no question was to be asked beyond the sovereign will of the people, was to leave every thing to the disposal, first, of sanguine, intemperate, and therefore dangerous men, and ultimately of bad, designing men, and of furious and ferocious men. Nothing can be so base in itself, and so fatal to the state, as to act in subserviency to the popular will, when it is felt to be wrong.

The great points of interest when the States met, were such as I have already proposed to your consideration, the verification of the powers, the early votes of the Assembly,

the struggle and the result, as far as we have yet proceeded in the history. It will be curious to observe, what such a man as Bailly has to say on such important subjects. I will, immediately, endeavour to give you some notion of what seems to have occurred to him, but I will first allude to a few particulars which I think are of a preliminary nature. For instance, Bailly lays down the propriety and necessity of a particular dress for people in public situations. He laments that the costume appropriated to each order in the National Assembly was at last abandoned. One of the notions (a very convenient one at the time) to which the French Revolution gave currency, was, that every thing ought to be rested entirely on its own merit; that a magistrate or a king was but a man, and was, therefore, only to appear as such. This is very much the tone and language of all republics; directly opposed to that of monarchies and courts: each carries its notions to an extreme. But Bailly's testimony is clearly against the republican extreme, and is somewhat remarkable, considering the times in which he lived, and that he was by profession himself a philosopher. He had every temptation to be wrong; but being president of the National Assembly he probably discovered, that there were other things which affected large masses of mankind besides merit, and that the natural associations of the mind and feelings of the heart should be made available to the great cause of peace and order and law.

Again,—One of the main causes of the failure of the Revolution was, the liberty which the people in the tribunes assumed of expressing their applause or censure of what was going on in the Assembly. It is curious, therefore, to observe the first approaches of a power so fatal, and the reasonings which led to its introduction.

The line taken by our own House of Commons seems the right one; that strangers, as they are called, should be admitted (for advantages quite inestimable result from the publicity of their debates), but that any member should have a power of ordering them instantly to withdraw, which secures, and can alone secure, their non-interference: a point that is on one side quite as indispensable, as is the publicity of the debates on the other, and even more so.

"Just as we were going to deliberate," says Bailly, "a deputy demanded that the strangers should withdraw; the proposition was rejected. It was settled, that there could be no discussion that ought not to have the greatest publicity, for there could be none that had not for its object the interest of every citizen. The strangers were, therefore, only given to understand, that they were not to seat themselves among the members, and carefully to abstain from all expressions of censure or approbation;" — "an engagement," says Bailly, "made with the public, which the public has not always observed." They were sure not to observe it, it may be replied; and the deputy's motion should have been carried, and the rule made what it is with us. There was, no doubt, a difficulty in the case of the National Assembly, who thought themselves in need of the constant sympathy and support of the public; but it was not so necessary as they supposed, and they bought it too dearly. In a subsequent part of his Memoirs, you will find many curious particulars on this very important subject; Bailly was always aware of the fatal, at least very dangerous, consequences of the interference of the galleries.

You will find, too, observations on the first rise of the clubs, and of their objectionable nature; the Assembly seem not at first to have admired them.

I will now proceed to the main subjects on which the notions of Bailly should be observed.

You must remark, as I read, the tone and manner of his reasonings: they must have been those of wise and good patriots, like himself, at the time; they are specimens of the effect of the new opinions. I produce them as a sort of picture of the Revolution; and you must not be repelled by the dry and tedious nature of exhibitions like these, now or at any other time, for I conceive them to be the best chance of your instruction.

The National Assembly had been sitting some time before Bailly and the deputies for Paris had joined them.

The great question of the verification of the powers was now in full agitation. Bailly discusses and gives the history of it, but seems not to have seen the dangers that were to be apprehended from the vote by head, instead of by order, which

was the question really at issue; and an issue which was to determine another point of still more importance, whether the Revolution was to go on step by step, and with due moderation and delay, or to proceed with a rapidity that even Bailly might have seen at the time would be very dangerous. On the contrary, his apprehensions seem to have taken no other but an opposite direction; and this, I conceive, to be one of the lessons of his work. "To divide and rule," says he (80), "has been always the maxim of governments, (he alludes to the wish of the court for the vote by orders,) and the application of it seems to be thought useful, even in such new circumstances as ours; and at the moment, when it has become prejudicial to the public weal, and dangerous to those who so make use of it. It is on the contrary," says he, "quite necessary that every power should be united to make the constitution; and above all things, that the constitution, as it proceeds, should trample down all difficulties and resistance." This is not very agreeable to Bailly's earlier and more sound mode of reasoning, such as I have quoted at the opening of the lecture.

But to proceed. You will see still further in the passages I shall now quote, how distinctly the new opinions appear in the views and reasonings of this eminent philosopher; a philosopher of some standing, but a somewhat newly made statesman.

"The nobles," he says, "decreed, that the deliberation by order, and the power of each order to put a veto on the proceedings of the other two, were part of the very constitution of the monarchy, and that they must maintain them as the defenders of the throne and of freedom."

"What a strange decree!" says Bailly; "the representatives of about two hundred thousand individuals or more, who are noble, take upon themselves to decide, and in their own favour, a question that concerns twenty-five millions of men. They assume for themselves the right of the veto; they declare the powers and the principles of the constitution; and who are they, more than others, who thus declare?" M. Bailly, a calm and most intelligent philosopher, appears thus, at this particular period—such was the effect of the new opinions—to have seen nothing in an order of

nobility but a collection of so many individuals: a most vulgar and miserable misconception. But Bailly was not merely a man of science; he had even lived in Paris, and was at the time enjoying a pension from the crown as a man of letters: so strong had set the current of public opinion against privileged orders, even so early in the Revolution as May, 1789. He seems never for a moment to have seen or to have regarded the importance of their body, as a body; the propriety of their argument, even with reference to the safety of the monarchy.

Again, on the 5th of June, probably for the first time, the language of democracy was sounded in the Palace of Versailles. A deputation of the Tiers Etat was to wait upon the king. Bailly was the president; he had to adjust the ceremonies with the keepers of the seals. "It is not," said the keeper of the seals, "that one would insist upon any ancient custom (the going down upon the knee), any that would hurt the Tiers Etat, or that the king has any intention of exacting any observance of this kind; yet still, as this custom has existed from time immemorial, and if the king should will it—" "But if twenty-five millions of men should *not* will it," interrupted Bailly, "where would be the means of forcing them?" This, to be sure, was a question not hitherto asked at Versailles, in the palace of Louis XIV., and shows in Bailly's mind the inroad of the new opinions.

With respect to the struggle that ensued between the Tiers Etat and the privileged orders, M. Bailly describes it much in the way you will see it given by others.

At last the Tiers Etat, it seems, having first dropped that name, and called themselves "the Commons," voted themselves "the National Assembly."

"There was some little awkwardness," says Bailly,—(undoubtedly there was,)—"in thus declaring ourselves to be the nation. In the first place, it was not exactly true," says he, "while there was assembled at the time a Chamber of the Clergy, and a Chamber also of the Noblesse, with a right to be so assembled; and yet it was certain that the French in mass (the clergy and nobility excluded) were such a majority, that they might be considered as the whole nation. Usage was on one side," says he, "reason on the other: usage,

which divided the nation into three portions, one immense, and two very diminutive; reason, that wished to unite them all, or that thought the one larger should absorb the two small ones." Now here I must observe, on this passage of M. Bailly, that this is revolutionary language; that it is by reasonings of this kind that men on all these occasions colour their usurpations, deceive others and themselves. Men are to be numbered by the head; things are to be reduced to their first elements; what is called reason is to be brought forward to put aside all usage and custom; that is, to put aside all existing feelings and associations; and the nation is to take the chance of a new set, better or worse (as it may happen), to be formed with difficulty, and, after a collision, a conflict with the old, ending probably in a civil war.

Acts of usurpation should be also, on another account, most carefully avoided, not only from the justice of the case, from the possible inexpediency of the proceeding, but from the impossibility of receding, when a public body has once committed itself. An accidental circumstance is here to be remarked. It was one misfortune among others, that the Tiers Etat had got into the great hall, where the States General would naturally assemble: there they were; and it appeared more in course for the other orders to be found there too, that is, to come to them, than the contrary; that is, the Tiers Etat were themselves profiting by the very associations which they were calling on reason to destroy.

But this act of usurpation was, in fact, not proposed in the assembly of the Tiers Etat without exciting the greatest sensation; not without tumult and noise the most frightful and overpowering; and this is a very curious circumstance. M. Bailly evidently gives himself the greatest credit for the calmness and the sort of *vis inertiæ* that he displayed. He was president. Three or four hundred members among them, "the brave Bretons," as he calls them, stood bawling for the question before him; behind him, about one hundred endeavouring to cause an adjournment, by making, if possible, a still greater uproar, that all business might be impracticable; the great table that stretched along the hall and divided the parties, alone prevented them from coming to blows: a scene this, which might have taught M. Bailly and the patriots

how much more easy it was for men to feel than to think, and that the reason to which he and they were referring every thing was only one element among others in the composition of human nature.

I cannot but think this portion of M. Bailly's account somewhat edifying. It is my office to denounce to you all acts of usurpation whenever they appear, whether committed by the friends of liberty or its enemies. Acts of usurpation are violence; violence must be followed by violence, by hatred, dissension, bloodshed, by individual and national calamity. It is natural for me to turn my own eyes, and to wish to direct yours, to the beginnings of these things: when the flood-gate is once opened, it is in vain to lament the rushing out of the torrent.

But to proceed. After a more orderly sitting the next day, the following resolutions were decreed, and were the first constitutional acts of the Assembly, by a majority of four hundred and ninety-one to ninety; something more than five to one. Observe now the nature of the resolutions of the Assembly, and of Bailly's reasonings while considering these resolutions. The point to be effected was, to show how and why the Assembly were to be every thing, and every other authority in the state nothing. Observe, then, I repeat, the revolutionary, special pleading of the Assembly in the first instance, and of their commentator, the philosopher, in the second.

"The Assembly," says the first paragraph of these resolutions, "the Assembly, deliberating after the verification of its powers, perceives that it is already composed of representatives sent directly by ninety-six hundredths, at least, of the whole nation." Very well: "Nothing," says Bailly, "can be more exact than this assertion."

Again: "Such a mass of deputation," continues the resolution of this Assembly, "cannot remain inactive on account of the absence of the deputies of some particular baillages, or of some classes of citizens; for the absent, who have been summoned, cannot prevent those who are present from the full exercise of their rights, particularly when the exercise of those rights is a duty imperious and pressing."

"Nothing," says Bailly, "can be more regular than this;

there the principle, here the consequence: quite unanswerable. The four-hundredths that are absent, but duly summoned, cannot impede the ninety-six-hundredths that are present. Certainly not. To show the contrary, one has only indeed," says Bailly, "to cite usage, custom; but reason," he replies, "that has now awaked, stifles all murmurs of this kind about usage and custom;" and reason having thus done its office, M. Bailly can proceed, as can the resolution of the Assembly, to the desired point, and that, after the following manner:—

"Moreover, as it belongs to those representatives only, who are verified, to concur with the national will, and as all the representatives verified must be in this Assembly, it follows indispensably that it belongs to this Assembly, and to this Assembly only, to interpret and to produce the general will of the nation." All right again, it seems, according to Bailly: "The principle," says he, "that all the representations should be verified, is incontestable; that the representatives ought all to find themselves in the Assembly, incontestable also (it can be contested only by the two orders). And this last principle admitted, the assertion that it belongs to the Assembly, and to the Assembly only, to declare the will of the nation, has in it nothing rash, and nothing that is not perfectly well founded;" that is, in other words, according to M. Bailly, for the king's will, which was formerly the term, the national will was to be substituted; and by the national will was meant the will of the Assembly; and so it comes out (according to *this* reasoning at least) that the States General had been called together by the king, that a part of them, the Tiers Etat, might be made king instead of him. Certainly usage and custom was against all this, but reason was then adequate, according to M. Bailly, to settle every thing.

Particularly it seems, as the Assembly went on to decree that "there could exist between the throne and the Assembly no veto, no negative power;" and as the Assembly declared further, "that the common work of the national restoration could and ought to begin without further delay by the deputies present, and that they ought to pursue it, as without interruption so also without obstacle." Further, "That

the name of National Assembly is the only one that befits the Assembly in the present state of things; as well because the members who compose it are the only representatives lawfully and publicly known and verified, as because also they are sent by almost the whole of the nation; and because, finally, the representation being one and indivisible, no one of the deputies (for whatever order or class they may be chosen) can have the right of exercising their functions separately from this Assembly.

"Here," says Bailly (still proud of the reasoning and wisdom of the Assembly), "here, then, we finish by a principle which confirms and legitimatizes all the rest, the unity of the national representation. What sort of a state," says he, "is that, where the nation has three voices? and what then is to be the result of these three voices? Is it the majority of the three that is to decide? Would it not then be of course, that the nobles and the clergy, four in the hundred, would in the event be the majority over the remaining ninety-six? But who then will at last have to decide between the two orders and the Tiers Etat? The king. But then the nation has no longer a will. Be the following truths, then, agreed to:—No more orders in the representation of the nation; deliberations in common; unity in the representation. Let me admire," says he, "the wise and firm march of the Assembly;" and the movements of this march are then by him again recapitulated.

Something, however, of civility, of haughty civility, that must have been more offensive than the usurpation itself, was to bring up the rear of this column of reasoning.

"The Assembly," said the last clause of the whole resolution, "will never lose the hope of uniting in its bosom all the deputies that are now absent; will never cease to call upon them to fulfil the obligation that has been imposed upon them of concurring with the sitting of the States General. At whatever moment the absent deputies may present themselves in the session about to open, the Assembly declares beforehand that it will hasten to receive them, to share with them, after the verification of their powers, the continuance of the great labours which cannot but procure the regeneration of France."

After these resolutions, it seems the Assembly voted what they and M. Bailly considered a respectful address to the king, to apprize him what the resolutions were; that is, to apprize him that he was to descend from his throne and to seat himself by the president: this, or something very like it; and then the hall resounded with reiterated shouts of *Vive le Roi!*

Such is the account given by M. Bailly of the revolutionary logic that was used, and of the proceedings that followed. I know not how to give you a better idea of the situation of France at the time, than that such logic should be tolerated and such proceedings ensue. M. Bailly was, as I must again and again repeat, an amiable and sensible man, a calm and distinguished philosopher, a disinterested patriot; yet could M. Bailly not perceive, that while the Assembly were thus usurping in fact the whole power of the state, the king in the mean time had done nothing to justify them in thus setting him aside, and all the rules, and maxims, and orders of the ancient monarchy aside also; that they were standing away full sail from the shore, and embarking on an untried ocean, with no star to guide them but their reason, as they termed it; or rather, perhaps, with no other light but the flashes that might issue from the thunder-storms of the multitude. The injustice, the rashness, the folly of all this, seems never for a moment to have reached the apprehension of this most respectable member of the Assembly. The regeneration of his country was his object; the sovereign will of the people his means.

Such was M. Bailly; such were thousands of intelligent men around him. What could be expected, what could be hoped, from the majority of a nation, when such were the most distinguished of the wise? But such is the instruction of those who consider themselves as the wise also, now or hereafter.

The next act of the Assembly was in course. M. Bailly, and no doubt the members themselves, were conscious that the act by which they had thus constituted the Tiers Etat the National Assembly, comprehended in its meaning and operation the destruction of the two privileged orders. "In establishing," says he, "that we could do without them, we

showed their inability and their abuse. Government," he says, "could not but see that this act seized upon that authority which had, till that time, been exclusively royal, to throw it into the hands of the nation and its legitimate representatives." And now, you will observe, as one usurpation was to be followed up by another (and this is always one of the great objections to any thing that bears the very appearance of usurpation), it became necessary to the Assembly, as acquiescence in their proceedings could not possibly be expected from the court, to provide for the permanence of their sitting, lest their dissolution should be attempted, and their leading members seized and imprisoned; and they, therefore, proceeded next to vote, that the existing taxes not having been consented to by the nation, were illegal; but that they consented to them provisorily, and legalized them, till the day of their dissolution, after which none were to be legal which they had not expressly made so.

Now here it may surely be asked, was this the manner in which the king was to be treated, or even the two privileged orders? These two privileged orders had formally (however late) given up their immunity from taxation. Is there not always in the affairs of mankind, as in the action of bodies, a reaction to be expected? Is it to be wondered at that the court should urge the king to bring up the army to dissolve the Assembly?—that the king should consent to it? It is very true, that if things had been left to take their natural course, the Tiers Etat might have found great opposition from the other two bodies, voting by order, not by head; their Revolution would not have proceeded at the rate they wished: but was this a reason for their putting every thing to issue; for their making their terms so hard to the king and the patrons of the old régime; for their running the chance of a civil war?

But such, it will be said, was the nature of the times. Then such, I reply, is the lesson of the times, and as such I propose it, along with the antecedent selfishness and folly of the privileged orders, to your most careful consideration. There is selfishness on the one side, rashness on the other.

But I have gone more into this subject before, and explained myself more calmly. It is difficult to be calm when

the very reasonings that have led to fatal consequences are, as in the Memoirs of Bailly, exhibited to our more immediate view; when their dangerous pretensions, their shuffling sophistry, their triumphant injustice, can be seen through.

Soon after, you will remark, new circumstances appearing, the votes were printed and published; the members of the Assembly, the clergy particularly, were, therefore, hooted or applauded by the populace. M. Bailly, it is true, makes here the proper observations; but it should have taught him, and have taught others, to take care that such statesmen as these, the populace of Paris, did not interfere in the debates of the Assembly. M. Bailly notes this as the commencement of that war that was afterwards waged by the Sansculottes and hired armies of Paris; that is, it was the commencement of the destruction of the cause of liberty and of M. Bailly and his fellow patriots.

And now you will observe that the lesson is to *alter*, and you are to be called upon to remark an extraordinary want of skill and circumspection in the conduct of the king and the court.

Some opposition was of course to be made to these proceedings of the Assembly, and, as you may remember, a royal sitting was determined upon (the sitting of the 23rd of June); that is, the king was to occupy the hall of the Assembly, while he summoned to his presence and addressed there the three orders of the States General.

Instead, therefore, of notifying his intention in an official manner, as he would have done to the parliaments, M. Bailly, the president, received no proper official notice, and he and the members of the Assembly had to say to themselves and to each other, " Is it decent that the members of the National Assembly, or even the deputies of the Commons, as you may still please to consider them, is it decent that they should thus be apprized of the intentions of the king, of the suspension of their own sittings, and of the shutting up of their hall, only by public criers, and by notices posted on the wall, as the inhabitants of a town would be made acquainted with the shutting up of a theatre?"

These are the words of M. Bailly, and are but too reasonable; and the conclusions that were drawn by him and

others were but too natural—that what the court intended was to prevent the Assembly from sitting at all; to prevent any more resolutions like those we have just alluded to, of the 17th, till some great blow should be struck (probably at the sitting of the 23rd); to prevent the union of the clergy at all events; and to allow no time to the Assembly to take measures in opposition to the royal sitting. These seem to have been the notions of M. Bailly, and no doubt of the rest of the Assembly; and it must be confessed that they were very fair conclusions for them to draw, and that they afterwards under these impressions defended themselves from the court, and supported their late usurpation of the powers of the state, with great firmness and spirit.

The facts as related by Bailly himself, one of the principal persons concerned, are the same that have been given you by other writers, and you are already acquainted with them. The deputies of the Tiers Etat were shut out from their hall, when they came to renew their sitting agreeably to their adjournment; they therefore assembled in a tennis court, and the opportunity was taken to declare, and indeed, under the circumstance of the case, it was necessary to declare, that wherever its members could meet, there was the National Assembly, and to enter into a solemn engagement never to separate; an oath with uplifted hands was the form adopted, after the theatric manner of the nation; it was pronounced aloud by the president, heard outside the doors, re-echoed in all the streets, and all around accompanied and followed up (one cannot immediately see why) by universal shouts of *Vive le Roi!*

The revolutionary language, however, in which the decree sets out is remarkable. "The National Assembly," (the words are,) "considering, that called upon to fix the constitution of the kingdom, and to effect the regeneration of public order," it is then added indeed, "and to maintain the true principles of the monarchy, resolves," &c. On these last words M. Bailly seems to rest his thoughts with some complacency. "The Assembly," says he, "took proper precautions against the ministry, and armed itself against its despotism, but was heart and soul with the king, and had no intention to do any thing in opposition to his lawful authority; and it was against

despotism, not against the monarchy, that its proceedings were directed.

No doubt these were the views of Bailly and the majority of the Tiers Etat; but their new opinions, their contempt for precedent, for experience, and the established forms and notions of the monarchy, assisted by the original perverseness, the blindness, the stupidity I had almost called it, of the court, and the lamentable want of character in the king, soon rendered their good intentions vain, soon threw every thing into a state of difficulty, from which no wisdom of theirs could ever afterwards extricate the unhappy country they had wished to serve; but had endeavoured to serve by such rash and dangerous proceedings.

"What has inevitably brought on and hastened the Revolution," says M. Bailly, "is, that the ministers would never see that the state of things was every where changed.

"Time was, when one led the people with ease; for cabinets were then so superior in intelligence; but this superiority has been lost, and has at last even changed places, and a new manner of governing must now be adopted; a truth which ministers have not yet felt the force of."

On the whole, therefore, it turned out that the expected royal sitting was considered as a bed of justice. Troops, too, were perceived to be approaching; the sitting was put off from the 22nd to the 23rd. In the middle of the night Bailly was called up, and privately informed that Necker disapproved of the measures adopted, that he would not attend the sitting, and would probably be dismissed. It had been settled between Bailly and the Assembly that no reply should be made to the king, whatever he might say to them; it was afterwards intimated to Bailly by the king that he wished no reply to be made; and under these most unfortunate circumstances the royal sitting opened on the morning of the 23rd.

I have already mentioned to you that I consider this sitting of the 23rd as one of the most important turns in the history of the Revolution. The patriots, I conceive, should have been content with the king's proposals then delivered, but they seem to have had no notion of the kind; and it becomes a point of curiosity to see what occurred to a man like Bailly at the time.

The detail which he gives is what is given by others, and what you know. The most deplorable want of contrivance was shown by the ministers even in so insignificant a matter as the admission of the Tiers Etat into the hall: they were kept waiting, as you are aware, and in the rain, till the other two orders were seated; apparently lest they should mix themselves along with them. The majority of the clergy had joined them the day before.

"One was astonished," says Bailly, "to observe that the king had been made to use the old phrases, 'the king wills,' 'the king understands,' &c.; that he had been made to nullify the resolutions of the Assembly, when as the chief head, the hereditary representative of the nation, he could only have a veto. Many deputies observed upon such expressions as 'the benefits which the king has granted to his people,' &c. &c. The king sole master, indeed, and sole legislator in the *absence* of the nation, can he thus speak to the nation assembled in the form of its States General!" Here we see new opinions. "The Commons," he continues, "during the reading of the king's declarations, remained in a silence the most profound. Not so the majority of the noblesse and the majority of the clergy, who accompanied and followed these two declarations with the most frequent bursts of applause. Well they might, indeed, for they were partly their work."

"Unhappy prince!" says Bailly, commenting on the conclusion of the king's speech (the spirited part of it), "unhappy prince! to what have they pledged you, and how have they deceived you!"

He then gives the minute particulars of what passed, all of which, on such an occasion, are important. He told the master of the ceremonies, he says, that the Assembly, having adjourned till after the royal sitting, could not separate without first deliberating, and that it was not (as had been reported) to the master of the ceremonies, M. de Brizé, but to those around him, that he added, "I conceive that the nation assembled can receive no orders."

"I respected," says Bailly, "the king too much, and knew too well what was due to the Assembly, to send any such message without their direction.

"It was, in truth," he continues, "it was Mirabeau that

took upon himself to be angry with M. de Brizé, and he said pretty nearly what has been reported: 'Go tell those who sent you, that the force of bayonets is of no avail against the will of the nation.'

"This has been praised," says Bailly, "as an answer; but it is no answer, it is a sort of apostrophe, which he was under no necessity of making; which he had no right to make, for it was the president alone who was called upon to speak. No one had said a word to us of bayonets; no force had been announced to us; no menace had issued from the mouth of M. de Brizé: nothing of the kind. He had reminded us, as it was his duty, of the order of the king; had the king a right to give that order? The Assembly, by continuing its sitting, had decreed—no; and I," says Bailly, "in declaring that the Assembly could not be separated till it had deliberated on the point, had maintained its rights and its dignity, and had kept within that sort of limit and restraint which an assembly and its president should never fail to observe." These are the words of Bailly.

I had long, I confess, before I read these remarks of Bailly, considered the address of Mirabeau (as reported) to the master of the ceremonies as entirely uncalled for, and as a very ostentatious flourish, which the Assembly should not have appeared to adopt; and it is agreeable to perceive that a reasonable man like Bailly, however patriotic, however a disciple of the new opinions and an actor in the scene (though the actor interfered with), so considered it. Violent sallies, such as catch the applause of public assemblies at the time, are always very suspicious in point of wisdom, sometimes in point of principle, and are upon the whole to be avoided, and neither to be produced nor applauded by those who mean well.

There was then a pitiful attempt made by the court to disturb the Assembly by workmen, and make them quit the hall. The result of the whole was, that the Assembly unanimously declared, that it persisted in its former resolutions; and as those had been in the royal sitting formally annulled by the king, the royal authority and that of the Assembly were thus placed entirely at issue; and Bailly observes, that the Assembly was never so great as at that moment; ren-

dered so, by a declaration so simple, so precise, and all circumstances considered, so firm. What the ministers gained, says he, by this strange sitting, so he terms it, was only to make the nation exhibit a new act of sovereignty, and by a solemn act to decide, and in favour of the nation, the conflict that then existed between the powers of the nation and the king. The Assembly concluded by declaring their persons inviolable.

Four pages now follow in M. Bailly, which will show the student very distinctly the views that were taken of this singular crisis, probably by the most intelligent and patriotic men of France, at this particular period.

I have already announced to you that the Assembly should, I conceive, have closed with the proposals of the king, and saved their country from the storm that evidently was impending; but this is the great question, and you must well observe what are the sentiments and expressions of such a man as Bailly at the time.

In the first place, he begins with representing the conduct of the Assembly, as 'above all Grecian and all Roman fame.' "Nothing in antiquity," says he, "can be opposed to these resolutions in point of wisdom, and nothing to the firmness of those by whom they were adopted. But at the close of this discussion, while endeavouring to show the injudicious conduct of the ministers, where, says he, was their force to carry their measures? were they sure of the soldiers? The event proved, not. Could they believe in their numbers, &c.; this was the cause of the people, but the soldiers are people; what then could they have attempted? Imprisonment—but imprisonments are to have some term or other; they durst not have done it. But besides, however they might have deceived the king with regard to measures, of which he saw not the probable result, measures of rigour were foreign to his heart, and such, I am sure, he would have revolted from. But here it may be observed, in answer to M. Bailly, where was then this Roman firmness in the Assembly if they had no enemy to fear; and with respect to their wisdom, if such was the king, it might have surely been asked M. Bailly, why was the Assembly thus to erect their power upon the ruins of his? Why were they to force on this tremendous issue of a

distinct struggle between their king and the Assembly? They saw the ministers and the military force ranged around the king: behind themselves were placed the people of Versailles and Paris, who were to be taught, at all hazards, the doctrines of insurrection. These were the parties, this their situation, this the field of battle—and what an issue! Suppose the soldiers were to stand by the monarch while he maintained his late declarations, what was to become of the Assembly and eventually of the cause of freedom? Suppose, on the contrary, the soldiers were to side with the Assembly and the people, what was then to become of the royal authority? What various chances here of confusion and bloodshed! and on what account? Because France, upon a system of moderation and conciliation with the king and court, was then not to be regenerated, as it was called; because all that had been expected by the followers of the new opinions was then not to be realized; because the whole was then to proceed on a system of mutual tolerance, mutual concessions, checks, and balances; and because the old opinions were then not to be entirely scoffed and hooted out of the world by the new. Such were the calamities to ensue. Now was this wisdom in the Assembly? Was this the conduct of statesmen? Our own ancestors had a very different case before them, while acting in the long parliament. Charles I. had shown that his principles and feelings were perfectly arbitrary: far from calling together the free assemblies of the country, he had endeavoured for eleven years together to rule without them. Louis XVI., on the contrary, was a prince acknowledged, by the most furious of the assertors of these new opinions, to be peaceful, benevolent, patriotic, to be any thing but a tyrant. I am not now arguing the question with revolutionary, daring men, who enjoy disorder, and whose dreadful talents and propensities are called into full triumph and display, on such occasions, to the gratification of their personal pride or selfishness; but I speak to those who mean well, who deserve the venerable name of patriot, but who get enamoured of their own notions of political right; who are strong, as they suppose, in their powers of reason; who become, by sympathy, warm and heated; and who, by turning away from counsels of expediency, and of moderation, by not being

reasonable in time, by not striking balances, by not being content with what is practicable, without further experiment or hazard; in short, by despising every thing of this sane and necessary kind, become, in truth, political enthusiasts, and mere enthusiasts, dangerous to themselves, and enemies to the best interests of their country.

Now I apprehend this to be one, at least, of the great lessons of the French Revolution.

The first lesson, no doubt, is the restiveness of the privileged orders, who will never give way at all, and never, even if they do, concede in time. But the next is the possibility and danger of political enthusiasm, enthusiasm in support of a theory, in support of some supposed intuitions of the understanding, rights of human nature, dictates of common sense; and these two opposite lessons I have taken, and shall continue to take every opportunity of holding up to your observation, (and this even at the chance of wearying you,) on account of what I conceive to be their supereminent importance.

Observe the confession of M. Bailly himself. "In the second declaration of the 23rd," he says, "where the intentions of the king are manifested, it must be admitted, many things are settled by the king in a manner perfectly paternal; many which must have come within the view of the States General. There was to be no impost, for instance, without the consent of the representatives of the nation, none was to last beyond a session," says he. "All this was very good, but was this to be the form, when the nation, when the enlightened nation was present? 'Why are you not satisfied?'" he continues, "said one of his ministers to me; 'had the king made a declaration like this ten years ago, would it not have been received with enthusiasm?' 'Oh, yes,' I replied, 'no doubt, ten years ago.' 'Why, what then does the Assembly want or wish to do?' 'Every thing itself,' I replied, 'not for you to do it.'"

Now this conduct in M. Bailly and in the Assembly, I consider first, as following but too surely in the natural progress of political collision at all times; but secondly as the folly, the enthusiasm of new opinions, and such folly as new opinions will, on every occasion, display.

Matters now began to look very ominous. You remember the affair of the eleven soldiers. Bailly consulted Necker what was to be done, for in this case they had but one wish and sentiment.

Necker recommended the course that was afterwards adopted, but advised a city guard, as M. Bonneville had done, at an assembly of the electors a few days before; a scheme that was afterwards executed in an instant, and carried to an extent that overthrew all the existing executive authority in the kingdom, in the extraordinary manner you have seen, during the crisis of the 14th of July; but it is curious to observe, the first hints and origin of great events like these.

We have next appearances still more gloomy; the troops, the artillery every where drawing round Versailles, and Mirabeau's spirited speeches and addresses to the king. Bailly seems to have talked with some of the ministers, and remonstrated with them. They told him that the troops were only meant to maintain peace and order in Paris. The philosopher, however, set himself to work, and from the visible appearances and known facts, seems to have reasoned out (what I conceive to have been) the real state of the case and the views of the court, with sufficient success.

He seems afterwards to have been very much captivated with Mirabeau's celebrated address to the king for the removal of the troops. He refers particularly to that part of it where it is said, "We should but deceive you, Sire, if we were not to add, under the impulse of our present circumstances, that this empire of peace and order is the only one which it is now possible to exercise in France."

"It is not to be dissembled," says Bailly, "that Mirabeau was in the Assembly, its principle of force. Nothing could be more grand, more firm, more worthy of the occasion than this address to the king; with every proper form of respect, it is agreeable to the resolution of the 23rd, where the Assembly declares that it will persist; here, then, it tells the king himself the same. The great quality of Mirabeau was boldness; it was this that fortified his talents, directed him in the management of them, and developed their force. Whatever might be his moral character, when he was once elevated by circumstances, he assumed a grandeur and a purity, and was

exalted by his genius to the full height of courage and of virtue."

The remainder of the first volume of Bailly is chiefly occupied with the crisis of affairs that immediately took place, and which was terminated by the taking of the Bastile, the sudden appearance of an armed national force, or rather of an armed nation resisting the court and adopting the measures of the Assembly, and taking the chance of what was called the regeneration of France. M. Bailly seems not to have been in the secret of affairs, but he describes much in the way you have already seen, the anxiety of the National Assembly, and at the same time his own—the anxiety and terror of a good man, during a crisis so tremendous.

Nothing was wanting but the visible acquiescence of the king, which was given, and given with every appearance of sincerity and good will. The particulars are described by Bailly in the beginning of his second volume.

The king seems, according to Bailly's representation, never to have had any pleasure greater than that of being considered the father and benefactor of his people. He orders the troops to withdraw; gives up all idea of force, and without ceremony, and accompanied only by his brothers, repairs to the Assembly to make his peace with them. Expressions in his speech so move the Assembly, that they surround and attend him in his return to his palace. Nothing is heard but the sounds of "Vive le Roi." The trees, the gates, the walls, the statues, are all covered with spectators; the air is fine, the day brilliant; the people tell the king that he has need of no other guards. M. Villeroi answers, that he may resign his office, as the nation has taken his duty upon itself. "The walk is fatiguing to your majesty," said an attendant to him; "Not at all, not at all fatiguing," replied the king, pointing to the delighted crowd that escorted him. "These acclamations render homage to your character, Sire," said another. "How could they ever have misconceived me?" answered the king. The music sounded as they approached the palace. The air was that of the song, "How can you be so well as in the midst of your children?" The queen was seen waiting in the balcony with the Dauphin in her arms to be presented to the spectators; and the king, the court, the Assembly, and

the people, dissolve in an universal sentiment of peace, and tenderness, and joy. And thus far, at least, historians seem agreed.

Alas! the contrast between scenes like these and those that were so soon to succeed them; between these amiable effusions of a generous, loyal, I had almost said forgiving people, and the dark suspicions, the unreasonable clamours, the tumultuous inroad of a ferocious and bloody populace; the queen flying through her palace from assassins, and the king conducted captive to the metropolis!

# LECTURE XIII.

## FERRIERES.

IN my last lecture I endeavoured to introduce to your observation the views and reasonings of the philosophic Bailly in the earlier stages of the Revolution. I must continue a little longer this species of lecture: the leading and more critical points will thus be revived in your memories; the instruction belonging to them; different portraits of the Revolution will be offered you in their own fresh and natural colours; you will not have to receive my representations; you will see the materials upon which my own judgment, such as it is, has been formed.

To-day I shall therefore produce specimens of the views and reasonings of the Marquis de Ferrieres, a deputy of the Nobility, a patron of the old opinions, and who, an eye-witness of the scene, and apparently one of the most respectable of men, has every right to be heard.

The Marquis de Ferrieres was born at Poictiers in 1741, was a member of the Constituent Assembly, and was at the time about the age of fifty, and in the full vigour of his faculties.

He relates, he says, the facts that he witnessed, or that were reported to him by those on whom he could depend, and he neglected no written accounts that seemed likely to afford him information; he hopes to furnish materials for future historians.

He had early retired to the country, where he lived occupied with his duties and his studies. Of a religious turn of mind, he had written in defence of the best interests of mankind against the philosophers who had improved, as they supposed, on the doctrines of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau; and when sent, therefore, by the universal respect of the nobility of his bailliage, as their deputy to the States General,

his birth, his education, his religious habits of thought, all concurred to render him the defender of the old opinions, and to seat him on the opposition side of the Assembly, where he always voted, with the majority of the nobility, against the union of the orders, in concurrence with them on all the principal questions, and finally, against the great work of the Assembly, the Constitution of 1791.

He was not a speaker, but he was occasionally a writer, and, fortunately for us, he wrote on the subject of the French Revolution, or rather of the Constituent Assembly, and he seems to exhibit to us very faithfully the different impressions he received from what he saw and heard.

It is agreeable to find, that a respectable and good man like this was allowed to return to his tranquil pleasures and duties, and to die in peace, a few years afterwards, in 1804.

He opens his narrative by observing, that he was chosen deputy very unexpectedly to himself, but "I could soon discover," says he, "all the selfish interests that were actuating all the great bodies of the kingdom: the parliaments hoped to receive all that the States General could take away from the king; the high nobility to shake off the ministerial yoke, which had been imposed upon them by Cardinal Richelieu; the capitalists and the renters to pledge the state for the debt due by the king; and the Commons affected only to wish for a reform of abuses, while the double representation, which would have been null if the orders were to vote separately, showed plainly, that they meant to vote by head, and to make themselves masters of the deliberations that were to follow.

"The nobles in the provinces would have nothing to say to the great lords; their interests, they thought, would be sacrificed. My situation, which rendered me indifferent to all views of ambition, fixed their choice, and still more my principles, which were well known, but very far removed from any tendency to despotism; in me they believed they had found the mean, between abandoning every thing and conceding nothing: as I was not one that was bound to the court, what I was likely to retrench from the monarch would be all gain to the nation. Such is the history of my elevation; or it may be, that the Almighty, to punish my foolish pride, chose to

show me, that all my supposed virtues, all my vain science, upon which I so plumed myself, that all were of no avail in the great affairs of the world; that out of the confined circle in which his fatherly goodness had traced out for me, they could be of no use either to myself or my country, and that I might thus be taught to bless that compassionate wisdom which I had so often but little understood; for often has it happened to me in thoughtless moments, to murmur in secret at being limited to the exercise of the mere good qualities of a private individual, and removed from those employments which would have furnished me with an opportunity of exhibiting the talents and the virtues of a public man.

"I confess, that having participated in no intrigue to procure my deputation, it was with much secret congratulation that I saw myself now about to produce the fruits of twenty years of thought and study, and that I was now to be useful to my country. I was soon cruelly undeceived.

"But if I have not laboured for my cotemporaries, I have, for posterity at least. I now place before their eyes a faithful picture of the Constituent Assembly. It may be, that the experience of those who go before will not always be useless to those who follow.

"I write," says he, "not the history of the French Revolution, but of the Constituent Assembly. I mean to exhibit the speakers and actors just as they spoke and acted, and at the moment, and on the spot. It is of no consequence what they would say or do *now;* let them only ask themselves, did they or did they not so speak and act at *the time.*

"No sooner," says he, "had the deputies arrived at Paris, than they all seemed to give vent at once to their particular feelings; a general restlessness seemed to have got possession of all their understandings, a vague desire of change. The French, confined till that moment by a vigilant and severe police, which watched and controlled their every movement, their every thought, were totally unacquainted with all notions of the social compact, the rights of the nation, the rights of the monarch, those of individuals, those of different classes of citizens; and they hurried every thing into a state of exaggeration, every thing—even truth itself, to which they would have preferred error, as far more imposing and grand; they

abandoned themselves to the utmost intemperance of sentiments and language, as if, issuing from some long enchantment, they had now recovered the faculty of speaking and thinking. It was in the coffee-houses of the Palais Royal that was shown in its true colours this new development of the national character; every thing was to be understood, every thing was to be known, every thing was to be communicated, and therefore every day was there assembled a crowd of people. Here came one with a draught of a constitution in his hand, which he assured every one, in the most confident manner, must necessarily occupy the labours of the States General; then came another with a composition, which he read aloud with all his might, drawn up to suit the circumstances of the particular case of the nation; a third thundered away against the ministers, the nobles, the priests, thus clearing away the stage for what *he* also had to propose; while a fourth had climbed upon a table, and was discussing the great question of voting by head, or proposing chimerical plans of government of his own; each had his auditory, more or less numerous, that listened to him, and approved or censured." Such is the lively and I have no doubt very faithful picture given by the marquis.

Ferrieres takes the earliest opportunity of speaking of the Duke of Orleans (Bailly, you may observe, says little of him); but Ferrieres represents him as becoming, from a chain of circumstances, the idol of the people, and the chief of a party composed of nobles discontented with the court; philosophers greedy of honours and the good things of this world; men mortified at being nothing, when this was not the case with others; adventurers and bankrupts, who immediately after the meeting of the States General, and the rapid march of public opinion, indulged themselves in all possible hopes and expectations. "The duke," says he, "was himself without talents, and debased by a life of drunkenness; greedy of money to a degree that would have been perfectly reprehensible in a private man, but which was disgraceful and degrading in a prince; he had every vice which can make crime odious, and none of the brilliant qualities by which it can be in some degree illustrated in the eyes of posterity. The dead feelings of the duke," he says, "it was necessary

to animate, in some way or other, that he might appear to have a wish for something, and so they held out to him the supreme power, under the title of lieutenant-general of the kingdom; all the public money at his disposal, and, in the events which it was for him to hasten, the crown for his children, and himself thus made the commencement of a new dynasty."

This is the account of Ferrieres; and something of this kind must be supposed, the concurrence of opinion, reaching to similar conclusions, is so very great. There is a passage even in Bailly which seems to look the same way; but this part of the secret history of the Revolution has never yet been brought to light, and there is some difference of opinion on the subject. Mirabeau, you may remember, has been always suspected of having for some time connected himself with this desperate faction.

Ferrieres seems to have thought very unjustly of Necker on every occasion, his talents, his intentions; this you will see at the commencement of his work; he even supposes him to have been connected with the Duke of Orleans. With more reason, he represents the philosophers, the authors, the journalists, as turning against the parliament when the States General, a body more adapted to their purposes, had once been called for and granted by the king.

The meeting of the States General seems extremely to have affected the Marquis de Ferrieres, as indeed it did others. He saw the procession and the ceremonies of this great event, with all the pious emotions of a religious man, and all the hopes and fears of a patriot: his description of what he saw and what he felt is striking; and you have placed before you in this part of his work, the man whose opinions and observations you are going to read.

He makes such observations on what passed at the opening of the States, and afterwards on the Tiers Etat, as you might expect, but seems to think that great want of skill and capacity was shown by those who had the management, particularly Necker.

The description that he gives of the different people and parties that appeared around him is not very favourable; and a well meaning man, he at length observes, like himself,

insulated and left alone in the midst of such a multitude as this, knew not where to repose his confidence. One trait of the general picture, not being as much insisted upon by others as it deserves, I will give you; more concisely, but as much as possible in his own words. All through this lecture, you will observe, I make a sort of running translation of his work.

He is speaking of the part taken by the women in the Revolution, particularly those about court, of whom he is no great admirer. "A great wish," says he, "to be of consequence, to be busy; little jealousies and animosities, and attachments still more trifling; spleen, weariness, &c.; hearts emptied of all the natural affections; all these things concurred to throw most of the women about court into the popular party. With that eternal frivolity which marked their character, a Revolution, which was to decide the fate of France, was treated by them as would have been an intrigue that was to displace a minister, or advance a lover. Seated at their toilettes, or lost in all the soft luxuriance of their boudoirs, 'What a charming thing,' they cried, 'is a revolution!'—Gallantry is the great means on which the sex have to depend; this was always so, and it was thus that they were enabled to play a distinguished part in the wars of the League and of the Fronde. This means of influence was not neglected now; their lovers were members of the minority of the noblesse, and that was already much in their favour. But the harsh, yet firm and vigorous rudeness of the deputies of the Commons frightened them not; a new sort of language and of people had at least the merit of exciting curiosity. But what a triumph to decide a vote by their influence in one of the houses; to animate by a gesture, by a look, a patriot while pouring out from the tribune the flaming language of liberty! and again, how delightful to be eternally in motion, coming here and going there, to have mysterious conferences at one's house, to have the great interests of twenty-four millions of people discussed there; a people, too, that were regenerating themselves; to have cards at Paris, to harangue about constitutions, and to assure every one that one hated despotism and all its agents!

"Madame de Stael, the daughter of Necker, became one

of the most zealous propagators of democracy. Born with great powers of mind, very active faculties, a lively imagination, and a passion for celebrity, secret interviews, morning billets, evening meetings, parties of pleasure, intrigues, she was equal to every thing; at one and the same time, was she to be found at Paris, at Versailles, in the saloon, in the boudoir, always at work, and perfectly indefatigable. M^e^. de Luines, d'Aiguillon, de Castelane, de Tessé, de Coigni, each had their post, gave dinners, assisted regularly at the sittings of the Assembly, cajoled the patriot deputies, got them to write pamphlets, animated the weary, and supported the failing; politics took the place of topics of gallantry, and anecdotes of scandal; liberty was in every mouth, a love of rule in every heart; society became an arena that exhibited an universal combat, a combat marked, indeed, with rudeness and impropriety; difference of opinion furnished those who hated each other in secret, a pretext to hate each other openly,—all their affectations of sensibility, virtue, benevolence, and religion disappeared; down went the masks, and in some of these women all their moral deformity was shown in open day, and they seemed perfect monsters."

There is some spleen and ill-humour probably in this description, but no doubt a great deal of truth, and of important truth. The marquis, a grave studious man from one of the provinces, was not likely to be a very favourable critic of these ladies, or to be very favourably criticised in return.

Necker himself does not fare better with the marquis than his daughter. "This man," says he, "citizen of a small republic, ignorant of our manners, of our history, or having read it very superficially, having no clear idea of what is called a monarchy, had persuaded himself that the word king brought along with it the exercise of a power unlimited, and that all the opposition he had to fear to his ministerial speculations was to arise from the nobility and the clergy. At the house of Necker every thing was considered and decided; this minister-banker had conceived, it was said, vast projects; and what were they? Three successive loans of twenty-four millions, an augmentation of the leases of the farms, an extension of the imposts, a consolidation of the public debt, that new loans might be effected; and these were the objects called by his

hirelings the restoration, the regeneration of the state; and it was for these objects (he sought no more) that he contributed, without knowing it, without suspecting it, to the overthrow of the laws and of the ancient constitution."

But the marquis proceeds further than this. "The minority of the noblesse," he continues, "entered into the views of Necker; they met every day at his house; but Necker and the greatest part of these members of the minority were but mere instruments in the hands of others, men with designs far more extensive and profound. There existed a secret committee, where all the leading chiefs of the Revolution united; deputies of the three orders were there indifferently received, there was no difficulty made in the selection. This committee exercised a great influence over the deliberations of the three chambers; there were events prepared, there were concerted the manœuvres that were to be employed in the provinces to inflame the minds of the people, and to produce insurrections: every where it was in the mean time circulated in Paris, that there could be no States General but by an union of the three orders, that a bankruptcy was the necessary consequence of their separation. A crowd of Parisians came to the Assemblies of the third estate; there they heard pronounced with emphasis, I should rather say hurled out with fury, the vague terms of liberty, patriotism, and sovereignty of the people. From the Assembly they issued quite intoxicated with what they had heard, and breathing nothing but hatred and vengeance against the noblesse; a profusion of incendiary libels, hawked about in Paris, and transmitted to the provinces, diffused every where sentiments of the same kind, and the language was, and it was even heard aloud, that the horrors of St. Bartholomew were to be renewed, that the very race of aristocrats and tyrants was to be swept away from the earth."

The secret committee, that the marquis here talks of, if it existed at all, must have consisted of those who espoused the new opinions; but the marquis is very indistinct on such subjects, and this is the greatest fault that can be objected to him. He confounds together all those who espoused the new opinions in a very improper and perplexing manner. But in other respects, I do not conceive that the account of the

marquis is at all exaggerated, and I do not believe that any adequate idea can now be formed, even from his work or from any work, of the fermentation that existed in every class of society, in Paris and Versailles, soon after the meeting of the States General.

I do not see any thing very particular in the account which the marquis gives of the transactions that took place during the struggle between the orders, except, indeed, the most unfair and unfavourable turn given to every motive and measure of the minister Necker. The most important point to be observed in the account of the marquis is, that he does not at all conceal the intentions of the court, as other writers with his opinions have done, and I shall, therefore, quote largely from him, translating, as I go along, in the sort of general and running manner that I have announced to you: and you must listen patiently; for it is often difficult to judge, amidst the different representations that are given by different writers; and here we have a man of character, rank, and intelligence, himself an actor in the scene, and describing what passed and the views and conduct of all concerned, apparently, in the most impartial and fearless manner.

"The court," says he, "unable any longer to hide from themselves the real truth, that all their petty expedients to separate the orders served only to bring on their union, resolved to dissolve the States General. It was necessary to remove the king from Versailles; to get Necker and the ministers attached to him out of the way; a journey to Marli was arranged; the pretext was the death of the dauphin. The mind of the king was successfully worked upon; he was told it was high time to stop the unheard of enterprises of the third estate; that he would soon have only the name of king. The Cardinal Rochefoucault and the Archbishop of Paris threw themselves at the feet of the king, and supplicated him to save the clergy and protect religion. The parliament sent a secret deputation, proposing a scheme for getting rid of the States General. The keeper of the seals, the Comte D'Artois, the queen, all united. They persuaded the king that to satisfy the people was easy; that all that was wanted was a declaration accommodated to the wishes of the cahiers, that the noblesse and high clergy would accept it

with gratitude. All was therefore settled; and an order from the king announced a royal sitting, and suspended the States under a pretence of making arrangements in the hall."

Now deliberations of this kind may, as the marquis describes them, have taken place; they were very natural, when the Assembly had ventured upon such acts of encroachment and usurpation as they very early did; and it is indeed clear that they took place, from that interference of the court, which Necker afterwards experienced: but the measure of the *séance royale* was the minister's own; and if the proposals, which the king was to have made to the National Assembly, had been left what he made them, the measure might have saved France, or at least the popular party would have been then placed in the wrong.

But nothing could be more unskilful than appeared even to the Marquis de Ferrieres, the manner and every circumstance that was suffered to accompany this last critical effort of the king and court, this *séance royale.* "It had the semblance," says the marquis, "of a bed of justice. The hall was surrounded by soldiers and by guards; every thing about the throne was silent and melancholy; the declaration itself satisfied no one; and the king spoke rather like a despot who commanded, than a monarch who discussed with the representatives of his people the interests of a great nation."

This testimony is very strong coming from the marquis, and what followed is related by him as you have received it from others.

Every where you must observe, however, that the marquis expresses the most unfavourable opinion of Necker during all these transactions, while, it is quite certain, that mixed with a little personal vanity, the most sincere wish for the happiness of France and the happiness of mankind was the ruling motive with Necker. He is, however, considered by the marquis as thinking only of his place, in the most vulgar and wretched manner; in short, I consider the marquis as singularly unjust to Necker. But his great fault is always not to make sufficient distinction between one man and another.

We will now advert to what he says of his own order. You may remember that it was very late, and only by the interference of the king, that they could be persuaded to join

the Tiers Etat. What passed was, according to the marquis, as follows. "In the chamber of the nobles, in the mean time, the most violent dissensions prevailed. 'Let us join the Tiers Etat,' said Lally Tollendal, 'as the king has recommended us to do; there is a force of circumstances which is above every consideration of place and power, a great Revolution has begun, nothing can prevent it, it only remains for the nobility to concur with it, and to assign for themselves an honourable place.' 'You understand then at last,' said D'Espremenil, (the D'Espremenil you have before heard of,) 'you understand then that a great Revolution is begun; and is it even in this chamber of the nobility that there are found those who can dare to pronounce such a sound, that we are to be invited even to join it? No, gentlemen, no; our duty is to preserve the monarchy; the monarchy which the factious are going to destroy.'"

Every thing was agitation through the whole of this assembly of the nobles. Hostile passions, hostile interests appeared in the words, the gestures, the animated expressions of every one. (Ferrieres, who gives this account, was himself a member.)

"It was now a grievous mortification and affliction to the nobility to join the third estate. The Vicomte de Noailles assured the nobles, that the union would be but temporary; that the troops were coming up, and that in fifteen days every thing would be changed. The king sent a second letter, assuring the nobles that the safety of the state and his own personal security depended upon the union. 'Let us hasten to the palace,' said the Marquis de St. Simon, 'and make a rampart of our bodies round him.' It was with the greatest earnestness that the Duc de Luxembourg had to oppose himself to the general enthusiasm, to represent the embarrassing situation into which the king would thus be thrown. 'We can no longer deliberate,' said the duke, 'we must save the king, we must save the country; the person of the king is in danger. Who can hesitate? Who can venture to hesitate for a moment?' The assembly rose in a tumultuous manner, they were joined by the minority of the clergy, and entered," says the marquis, "in silence the hall of the Tiers Etat."

This step had no sooner been taken, in compliance with the

wishes of the court, than the court repented of it; and the description which the marquis now gives of the state of affairs is very candid, and entitled to the perfect confidence of the reader. Observe the freedom with which he speaks of all parties and persons. I shall use his words for some time. "The court, recovered from its terror," says he, "repented of it; they saw the intentions of the Commons; what they had already done sufficiently announced it. The new constitution, supported by general opinion, by the unanimous wish of the public, was now acquiring," says he, "a force which was likely to sweep away every abuse: the court knew that the nobility and high clergy would seize with eagerness any opportunity of dissolving these States General that intended their ruin. But a military force was necessary to keep down Paris, to break up the Assembly, and to enforce the acceptance of the declaration of the 23rd of June. Many of the nobles would have quitted the Assembly, but a partial secession would have done nothing: they were assured that the troops were coming up; were praised for their honourable feelings, for the resistance they had already made; that they must dissemble a little longer. And indeed," says the marquis, "thirty regiments were now marching upon Paris. The pretext was the public tranquillity; the real object, the dissolution of the Assembly. Difficulties without end kept retarding their march; provisions were not furnished them, money very sparingly. The Marshal de Broglio took the command, established himself at the palace of Versailles, surrounded by a brilliant staff; every thing was at his disposal. In the mean time, a part of the majority of the nobility continued to assemble at the Duke of Luxembourg's; protests were there entered into against the union with the Tiers; their mandates from their constituents were appealed to; the decrees of the National Assembly were declared to be null and void. Pretexts were discovered for its approaching dissolution; and their manœuvres, which were soon every where divulged, every where united all other descriptions of men to the National Assembly. The hall of the Assembly became, to all Frenchmen, their common country (I am all along giving the important representations of the marquis, and shall continue to translate his paragraphs). The Assembly

was made acquainted with every movement and every thought; and the absolute monarchy of France, betrayed by the very persons who drew from it all their consequence and all their support, remained alone and unassisted, though placed in the middle of its own people and agents. The queen, the Comte d'Artois, the princes, the courtiers, the ministers, the bishops, the nobles, were all surrounded by spies, by treacherous domestics, pursued by them into the most intimate recesses of their retirement, the very repose of the night: and they expressed not a sentiment, made not a gesture, that was not reported; and thus was generated that violent antipathy that took place against the nobles and the clergy. The Commons perceived, that these two bodies attached to despotism, as the true aliment on which they lived, would reject liberty, and would insist upon having in preference a brilliant servitude; and they therefore said to themselves, 'It is for us then, for us alone to make the Revolution.' And as they resolved that nothing should resist them, the destruction of the nobility was resolved.

"The Assembly, in the mean time, while these intrigues were going on at court, represented in reality the sovereignty of the people. It took its own measures, formed thirty committees for the dispatch of business, and France saw with joy that it was at last going to set about that regeneration of the state that had been so long desired and so long expected.

"The National Assembly," says the marquis, "sought in the people a support against the court; secret embassies, spread over every quarter of Paris, denounced the projects of the ministry. 'France,' they said, 'is going to become the prey of courtiers, nobles, and priests. This yoke, now imposed again upon us by force, will be more intolerable than ever. The monarch, disengaged from his promises, and entering again, by the dissolution of the Assembly, upon the full plenitude of his power, will know no other limit to his will but such as the most unlimited whims and fantasies may prescribe.'

"The capitalists," he continues, "the rent-holders, terrified at the prospect of a general bankruptcy, united themselves to the Assembly as to a common and only hope; they employed in the support of it the powerful means that were afforded

them by money, by credit, by very extended connexions. Paris, agitated by every possible passion, by every possible interest, peopled by men who had every thing to hope and nothing to fear from a Revolution, was the central point from which every movement issued. The court, accustomed to see Paris kept in awe by a lieutenant of police and a guard of eight hundred horse, little thought of any resistance, foresaw nothing, calculated nothing; did not even take care to assure itself of the very soldiers that were to be the instruments of its designs. The French guards were lost by giving the command to M. de Chalelet. The Assembly, in the mean time, neglected not the provinces; their correspondencies were multiplied, their agents every where inflaming the minds of the people, concerting insurrections, painting the projects of the court in the blackest colours, representing the nobility and the clergy as resisting the reform of those abuses by which they themselves so profited, as refusing to take their share in the public burdens, refusing to abandon their odious and unjust privileges, as secretly plotting the dissolution of the States General. Innumerable addresses and assurances of attachment were the consequence; and this unanimous concert and co-operation of every part of the kingdom, elevated the courage of the Commons, gave them an energy like that of the senate of Rome in the trying moments of the republic; and France, animated by a similar spirit, seemed a sort of immense forum, where the great questions of government were discussed in the presence of twenty-five millions of citizens.

"In this state of things," continues the marquis, "the Comte de Mirabeau made his celebrated address in the Assembly (the address for the removal of the troops)." And you will observe, that the marquis having admitted all the circumstances of the case that I have now laid before you, while I have thus been translating from his pages, admits finally the insincerity of the court in the king's answer, for, says he, "The Assembly easily saw through the snare that was spread for them; they would have lost all their hold if they had once removed themselves from the security which the vicinity of Paris afforded. Enclosed between the two camps, they would have found themselves at the mercy of the court."

These are the words of the marquis. I have called them his admissions, but it is an improper word. He seems to me a fair historian, giving his account fully and honestly (as far as public matters are concerned, though he is unfair to individuals,) without favour, or affection, or any wish of his own to gratify, but the honourable love of truth.

In addition to what I have already quoted, the marquis seems clearly to suppose, that what is called the Orleans Faction existed in Paris, filling the minds of the populace with the most dreadful apprehensions; that the citizens were to be massacred, the Palais Royal abandoned to the pillage of the army, chiefly composed, it was observed, of foreign regiments; that a bankruptcy was then to be declared: and the marquis proceeds to suppose, that Mirabeau was in reality at the head of this faction, and meant to have transferred the royal authority to the Duke of Orleans. All this has been both confidently asserted and much questioned. But the great misfortune was, that during all this period a scarcity existed in Paris, and under such circumstances there was no event, however outrageous, that might not possibly happen. Bailly mentions in his Memoirs, that while mayor, he was repeatedly uncertain one day whether Paris would have a sufficient supply of bread the next. And there was something singularly defective (and unintelligibly so) in the management of this article of prime necessity.

The Memoirs of the marquis now become particularly interesting, not only because he was a member of the Constituent Assembly at the time, but because he was a partisan of the old opinions and a lover of the monarchy; and yet the account he gives is not materially different from what has been delivered by men of opposite principles: and this is the great point which I must urge upon your attention. Nothing can be more interesting than the situation of Paris, of Versailles, and of France, of the popular party, of the Assembly, of the court, of the king, and finally of the army, during those three or four days and nights that preceded and followed the memorable 14th of July. In the first place it was clear, to the popular party, that the army was to be brought to act, and the Assembly to be put down. The approach of the troops and the appearance of Marshal Broglio left no doubt re-

maining on that head. The Marquis de Ferrieres first describes the manner in which an insurrection of the populace was begun by Camille Desmoulins, in the Palais Royal. "He mounted upon a table," says the marquis; "'Citizens!' he cried, 'I am just come from Versailles; there is not a moment to be lost. M. Necker is dismissed, his dismissal is the tocsin that sounds a St. Bartholomew to all patriots. This very evening the Swiss and German battalions are to come from the Champ de Mars to butcher us. To arms! to arms! We have no other resource.'"

What followed you will easily conceive, and conceive it as Ferrieres describes it to have taken place. The orator, with a pistol in each hand, rushes out into the streets, followed by his audience; they pass through the most populous streets; the crowd gathers; the barriers of the city are set on fire; the public spectacles closed; and all is alarm, confusion, and uproar. The insurrection is made more and more furious, and rendered triumphant, by the rencontre with the Prince of Lambesc, at the head of a detachment of his German troops. The night comes on; the tocsins keep sounding; armed men with lighted torches, continually passing, give the city the appearance of a place sacked by an enemy; and every thing is thus prepared for the alarmists to organize their insurrection by means of a regular committee communicating with the rest of the citizens.

In the mean time, nothing, according to the same account of Ferrieres, nothing could exceed the disquietude of the Assembly at Versailles. Many of the members met in the hall on Sunday, the 12th, but having been adjourned to the 13th, it was early on that day, the 13th, that a regular meeting took place. The members seemed differently affected. The revolutionists, in groups and in different parts of the hall, seemed considering what was to be done, terrifying each other or inflaming each other against the ministers. "The better part of the Assembly," he says, "strangers to all the intrigues that might be going forward, was filled with alarm at the sad reports that were circulating, and terrified at the designs of the court, which they were assured went to the seizing of Paris, the dissolution of the Assembly, and the massacre of the citizens. These members preserved a mourn-

ful and thoughtful silence, while the greatest part of the Assembly were evidently in the greatest agitation; on their countenances were painted anxiety, fierceness, fury, notwithstanding all their efforts to disguise their emotions. In the mean time the partisans of the court concealed their joy under an appearance of indifference. They came to the sitting to see what turn the deliberations would take, to enjoy their triumph and the humiliation of the Assembly. The Assembly they looked upon as annihilated; they had no doubt that it would have to accept the declaration of the 23rd of June, the States be separated, and things then be left to take their ancient course.

"Such," says the marquis, "was the blind folly and infatuation of these people."

He then goes on to describe the debate that followed: the speech of Mounier, recommending an address to the king in support of Necker and the disgraced ministers, followed by a beautiful defence of him by his friend Lally Tollendal, and the whole closed by a spirited harangue from the Comte de Virien; who described, in the most glowing colours, what had probably been passing during the night at Paris, and the necessity there was for all the members of the Assembly to pledge themselves to the country and to each other to stand by the noble resolutions they had already voted, and never to separate till they had discharged the great duties imposed upon them. An oath was immediately taken to this effect by all the members present; an address and a deputation sent to the king.

"The court had hitherto," says the marquis, "remained tranquil spectators of the movements in Paris. The troops posted at the Champ de Mars, at St. Denis, at Sèvres, at St. Cloud, remained in a state of inaction. One would have said that the new ministers, assured of success, left the insurrection to go on, and authorize at last those measures of rigour which they were resolved to employ; that they looked upon the situation of Paris as merely arising from a sort of passing insurrection; that they had no doubt that at the approach of the troops the people would disperse, and their terrified leaders come to solicit the clemency of the king.

"In the mean time, however, the tocsins kept every where

sounding; the shops," he says, "were shut up; the streets crowded with armed men, some running from house to house, talking of murder, and fire, and pillage; others marching with tambours and trumpets, with the soldiers of the regiment of French guards at their head; others forcing open the prisons of La Force and Du Chatelet, and announcing their intention of pillaging the great hotels and the houses of all the people of affluence."

This led, as you have already understood, to the seizing of the great dépôt at the Hotel des Invalides. The National Assembly, in the mean time, supported by what they could hear of the spirit of resistance that had now broken out in the metropolis, continued to debate and to address the king, who kept returning them civil and respectful, but by no means satisfactory answers; nothing that indicated that the troops would not be employed, the real point at issue. An account of what had passed at Paris, of the rise and progress of the insurrection, had reached the Assembly; had been highly grateful to some, and had elevated the courage of the most timid. "Every floating opinion," says the marquis, "was at last united, and the famous resolution was unanimously carried, 'That the exiled ministers had the confidence of the nation, that the Assembly would not cease to insist on the removal of the troops, and that it persisted in its former resolutions;' a resolution this," he continues, "which, under existing circumstances, was in fact a declaration of war. These vigorous resolutions," says he, "astonished the court, but did not induce them to abandon their plan: it was only put off to the next day; but there was no longer now a time," he continues; "the fate of France was from this moment irrevocably united to the fate of the Assembly; and no choice was left to the people but that of liberty or the most overwhelming despotism."

This is a very striking account, and these are very striking expressions from such a man as the Marquis de Ferrieres. "The greater part of the deputies," he goes on to say, "passed the night in the hall of the Assembly, less with the view of deliberating there or continuing the sitting, than with the hope of putting themselves into a state of security from the enterprises of the court. Many had received secret inti-

mation that they were to be arrested. They thought with reason that the sanctuary of the national representation would be to them an asylum, and that the court would not dare so openly to violate the majesty and the liberty of the French people."

Through all this part of his Memoirs, the marquis, a deputy from the noblesse, and on every account removed from all popular prejudices, leads his reader to suppose, that the Assembly, and the popular leaders, and the city of Paris, were entirely on the defensive. I shall continue to give you his representation of these momentous transactions.

"The insurrection," he says, "was at last regularly organized by means of the committee of the districts into which Paris had been divided; every preparation was made to resist the expected attack of the Marshal de Broglio; and at last, as the Bastile might have been made use of against the city by the marshal, it was voted, that this fortress should be taken possession of, at least surrendered into the hands of the magistrates of the city of Paris."

The tumultuous siege, and the sudden and most unexpected capture of it was the consequence, and such atrocities as you have already been made acquainted with.

"After these atrocities all Paris," says the marquis, "men, women, children, priests, and those connected with religious houses, all united to put the city into a state of defence: ditches were dug, the pavement taken up, pikes fabricated, and a deputation sent to the National Assembly."

The paragraph that now follows, coming from the marquis, is very remarkable. "The court," he says, "were resolved to act that very night; the foreign regiments were ordered to be under arms, the hussars were stationed at the palace, the guards in the courts, and in the midst of these menacing preparations, the court had an air of festivity that added insult to cruelty. The Comte d'Artois, the Polignacs, and M^e^. d'Artois appeared on the terrace of the orangerie; the music of the two regiments was made to play; the soldiers, on whom wine had not been spared, formed dances; a sort of insolent and brutal joy resounded on every side, and applauses from all the abandoned women and men that surveyed so strange a spectacle with delight. Such was the frivolity, or rather

the wickedness of those beings, that assured, as they supposed, of success, already indulged themselves in the most insulting triumph. Very different was, in the mean time, the aspect of the Assembly: a majestic calmness, a firm countenance, a wise but quiet activity, all announced the great interests with which they were occupied, and the dangerous situation of public affairs. There was no ignorance of the designs of the court: the Assembly knew very well, that at the moment of the attack of Paris, the foreign regiments were to surround their hall, carry off their most distinguished members, and in case of resistance, employ force; they knew very well, that the king was on the morrow to come and make them accept the declaration of the 23rd, and dissolve the Assembly; that already more than forty thousand copies had been sent to the intendants and their inferior officers, to be published and posted up in every place and corner of the kingdom. The Assembly, however, was resolved to brave every outrage rather than consent to any illegal proceeding like this, or betray the confidence of the people in sacrificing its rights to their own personal security. Nor were the Assembly," says the marquis, "without resources; the slightest attack upon them would have been the signal of a massacre, which would have involved in it the king himself, and all the royal family: a numerous populace,i n a sort of dark and fierce silence, and a suppressed feeling, that could in an instant have been converted into fury, surrounded the hall of the States, uneasy at the movements that it saw every where around, and waiting but a word to be transported into all the violences and extremities of despair.

"We had a confused notion," says he, "of what was going on in Paris. The posts were guarded, and the communication stopped; but every now and then a courier reached us, satisfying first the impatient curiosity of the multitude, and then reporting to us in our hall. We sent deputations to the king: the composed and severe air of the deputies showed the imperturbable courage of the Assembly. The people made way for them in the most respectful manner. On their return their looks and sorrowful air showed the people that their mission had been fruitless.

"To the first deputation the answer of the king had been,

though not harsh and determined, evasive; to the second, in his agitation, he had replied, 'You tear me to pieces by the recital you give me, of what has passed in Paris; it is not possible that the orders I have given can be the cause.' Proper answers were now sent to Paris by the Assembly, and Clermont Tonnerre prevailed upon the Assembly to pause, and not send a third deputation to the king till the next day.

"At eight the next morning, on the 15th, the day after the taking of the Bastile, various addresses were proposed in the Assembly, till the reading of them was on a sudden interrupted by Mirabeau, who, unable to contain himself any longer, burst forth into a furious invective against the court, and what he said he insisted should be made into a message to the king; and the deputation was moving away for the purpose, when the Duc de Liancourt appeared and announced to the Assembly that the king was on his way to them.

"The fact was," says the marquis, "that the night had passed at the palace in the utmost agitation and indecision; council after council was held; the ministers insisted that the troops should act; but, besides the unhappy consequences that it was possible might ensue from so violent a measure, of which the success was very uncertain, Louis XVI. had an invincible repugnance to every measure that could give occasion to the shedding of the blood of Frenchmen.

"The Duc de Liancourt had availed himself of his opportunities to address the king in the sincerity of his heart; and the king, moved by his arguments, by the concurring opinion of Monsieur his brother, and the tenderness of his own nature, had given way, and consented to repair to the Assembly.

"The arrival of the king," says the marquis, "produced different effects on the different parties; the first impression was a general one of surprise, then sentiments followed that were more the result of a little reflection. Well-meaning men, relieved from their terrors, abandoned themselves to their emotions of love and gratitude to the king.

"The Orleanists, mute and motionless, seemed struck with stupid astonishment; the Duke, Sieyes, Latouche, retired into a corner of the hall, and seemed to reproach each other for not having foreseen all this, and prevented it by some decisive measure of their own; every look, gesture, and movement

appeared to paint their vexation and their uncertainty what to do. The members of the old régime revolted from a condescension of the king, which they thought weakness, and considered themselves as deserted. Many members of the commons, whose pride and jealousy were not yet satisfied, notwithstanding this brilliant triumph, appeared quite out of humour, that they could not push still further the humiliation of the throne."

Of the remainder of the scene, what passed in the Assembly, and on the return of the king to the palace, the Marquis de Ferrieres afterwards gives the same account that you have seen given by Bailly and others. But he does not give the same account that Bailly does of the subsequent visit to Paris. This visit he considers as brought about by the partisans of the Revolution; that Louis might thus authorize, in a public manner, all that had been done, and in fact the new form of government that had just been given to the capital, the organization of the national force, an organization that was to be extended to every part of the kingdom. Louis was told that this step alone could quiet Paris, and give confidence in the sincerity of his intentions.

"A thousand fears, in the mean time," says he, "distracted the palace; the Parisians might seize and detain the king; some hired wretch might assassinate him; but Louis was resolved. Accepting the offer of a numerous deputation to accompany him from the Assembly, he set off, surrounded by the new militia of Versailles, that armed in haste, with any weapon that occurred, and clothed in rags, seemed rather a troop of vagabonds, collected together for the purposes of pillage, than an escort for the king of a great nation. The avenue of Paris was filled with a crowd of spectators: all in thoughtful silence, but with very different feelings, gazed upon Louis XVI. as he passed by. Yet this procession of the greatest monarch of Europe," continues the marquis, "could not but inspire the most melancholy reflections on the instability of all human grandeur. In the carriage with the king were the Dukes of Villeroi and de Villequiers; the marks of anxiety and chagrin were visibly painted on his countenance, a little dissipated for the moment by some appearances of interest shown him by the deputies and inhabitants of Versailles.

"His body-guards were at the barrier of Passy, and intended to have formed his cortège; but they were left at the gates of the city, and four only allowed to enter.

"Bailly, at the head of the municipal corps, presented the keys of the city to the king, with this singular expression:—'These are the keys which were presented to Henry IV. He made a conquest of his people; to-day it is the people that make a conquest of their king.'

"In truth, every thing announced a victory. One hundred and fifty thousand men armed with scythes, pick-axes, pikes, muskets, offered a spectacle majestic at the same time, and terrible: cannons on the bridges, and at the entrance of the streets through which Louis had to pass, seemed to say but too clearly, It is a great captive, and not a king, that is now coming into his capital, into the midst of his subjects.

"An immense mass of people, like a great and troubled ocean, smoothness, indeed, on its surface, but hollow murmuring in its depths, gave a mournful air to this vast and imposing spectacle. Every countenance seemed sombre, every look seemed cold, and every heart seemed closed against all the sentiments that once used to animate the hearts of Frenchmen for their king. The carriage moved on, surrounded by a numerous troop of people on horseback and on foot; the French guards with their artillery at the head of the column; a confused sound of musketry. The cries were a thousand times repeated of 'Vive la nation!' Not a word of the king; the most offensive silence; every where the humiliating haughtiness that proclaimed a triumph."

The marquis then makes the terms of his narrative concise. "Louis," he says, "got out at the Hotel de Ville; walked under the arms and pikes that were crossed over his head. He was placed on a throne that was prepared for him in the great hall. Some natural tears, it seems, he dropped; he attempted to speak; a sudden oppression seized him; he could only say, 'My people may always depend upon my affection.'

"Bailly presented to Louis XVI. the national cockade; and the national cockade was taken by Louis XVI. and placed in his hat: he appeared in it at the window; and this act of condescension excited numerous applauses.

"Louis XVI. confirmed the nomination of Bailly, of La Fayette, and retired. The Paris militia, no longer maintaining its menacing appearance, reversed its arms in token of peace. The same cortège reconducted Louis XVI. to the barrier of Passy, where he found his body-guards, who brought him back to Versailles."

This is the sort of melancholy account given by the marquis of the visit to the capital; a visit which, it must be allowed by every one, showed but too plainly that the old régime and the ancient monarchy of France had passed away, and that the authority of the state was transferred from the monarch at Versailles to the National Assembly and the commune of Paris. This inference was instantly drawn by those more immediately about the court. The Comte d'Artois, the ministers, Marshal Broglio, disappeared; and the king must be now considered as left alone in his magnificent palace, that told of the grandeur of his ancestors, no longer of his own, terrified by the past, and uncertain of the future; without confidence in himself, with little hope from the counsels of others, and with no consolation or support but the affection of his family, and that last appeal which is not denied even in this world to those who, however unfortunate, have meant well.

# LECTURE XIV.

## NECESSITY OF EXECUTIVE POWER.

I HAVE already observed to you how desirable it is that you should attend well to the opening scenes of this great Revolution. It is here that your instruction will best be found. I have also remarked to you, that it is not always easy to form just opinions on these momentous transactions, and that you may not as yet be exactly aware of the value of such just opinions, when they can be attained. I can have no wish that you should adopt what are delivered by me, any further than they are reasonable; and I am naturally anxious to fortify them by any testimonies that are within my reach.

I must therefore now mention to you a particular circumstance.

You will have remarked, that though I represent myself as deeply interested in the great cause of the liberties of mankind, still that I have distinctly protested against the conduct of the patriots of France during these earlier sittings of the Assembly, of the Tiers Etat; and above all, I have rested much on a particular crisis—on the declaration of the king on the 23rd of June. All through these lectures I have taken upon me to assert that it behoved the patriots to have closed with the king and the court on this occasion, and however altered and impaired the original measure of M. Necker might be, still to have accepted what was offered, and on such ground as was thus made solid under them, to have stood firm, and to have been satisfied with their success.

In these views, assertions, and final decision on the whole of the case, I have always considered myself as adopting an opinion at the hazard, or rather the certainty, of censure from those who think otherwise; and it was therefore with considerable satisfaction, that long after my lectures were written,

I met with a passage in the Memoirs of Jefferson, from which it appears that he actually came to the same decision on this important crisis of the 23rd of June that I myself had done, when himself in Paris at the time, in the situation of ambassador from America.

Mr. Jefferson, as it is well known, was a person of very warm, not to say violent temperament, and of opinions entirely democratic.

After describing events much in the way you have understood them from me, he proceeds thus:—"M. Necker's draught of a declaration was entirely broken up, and that of the Comte d'Artois inserted into it. Himself and Montmorin offered their resignation, which was refused, the Comte d'Artois saying to M. Necker, 'No, sir, you must be kept as the hostage; we hold you responsible for all the ill which shall happen.' This change of plan was immediately whispered without doors. The noblesse were in triumph, the people in consternation. I was quite alarmed at this state of things. The soldiery had not yet indicated which side they should take; and that which they should support would be sure to prevail. I considered a successful reformation of government in France as ensuring a general reformation through Europe, and the resurrection, to a new life, of their people, now ground to dust by the abuses of the governing powers. I was much acquainted with the leading patriots of the Assembly. Being from a country which had successfully passed through a similar reformation, they were disposed to my acquaintance, and had some confidence in me. I urged most strenuously an immediate compromise, to secure what the government was now ready to yield, and trust to future occasions for what might still be wanting. It was well understood that the king would grant at this time,—first, freedom of the person by Habeas Corpus; secondly, freedom of conscience; thirdly, freedom of the press; fourthly, trial by jury; fifthly, a representative legislature; sixthly, annual meetings; seventhly, the origination of laws; eighthly, the exclusive right of taxation and appropriation; and, ninthly, the responsibility of ministers; and, with the exercise of these powers they could obtain in future whatever might be further necessary to improve and preserve their constitution. They thought otherwise, however,

and events have proved their lamentable error; for, after thirty years of war, foreign and domestic, the loss of millions of lives, the prostration of private happiness, and the foreign subjugation of their own country for a time, they have obtained no more, nor even that securely."

I must mention, too, that long after these lectures were written, I have found such objections as are made in them to the proceedings of the National Assembly abundantly confirmed by the publication of M. Dumont, the friend and assistant of Mirabeau, a very able and enlightened man, at the time deeply interested in the liberties of France, and the fortunes of mankind.

But to proceed to my lecture.

The first events that occurred after the king had adopted the Revolution promised ill; Foulon and Berthier were massacred in the streets of Paris by the multitude; and every where through the interior of the kingdom the people of condition saw their country-seats burnt and pillaged, and themselves and their families exposed to the most dreadful outrages. Popular victories in the Assembly seem never to have had any effect on the ferocious passions of the people. It is no light matter to withdraw a community from the influence of established authority; it is never easy, it may not be possible, to substitute for some time any new system of control. In the interval, the lower orders are ready for any enormity that their own passions or the passions of designing or bad men may propose to them. It is very true that patriots must expose the faults of their rulers and the vices of their government, or they can hope for no reform in either; but every distinction should be always made, that can possibly be made, between governors and government itself; the selfish, unfeeling, odious vices of the rulers are to be resisted, but care must be taken not to pander to the base and brutal passions of the multitude. To do this, however, it will be replied, is pretty nearly to effect impossibilities. It may be so; yet such is the task to be held up to the virtuous ambition of brave and good men; and such men, the patriots of a country, must endeavour to accomplish it according to the varying opportunities of the case, and the qualities of mind and body with which they have been intrusted. Much of this task was

accomplished by the patriots of America in the great revolution that separated them from this country; a favourable one, totally unlike that of France or of any European country; cases with which it is so often confounded: and you may remember, even in this case of America, the confusion, the shame, the anguish with which the mind of Washington was but too often overwhelmed by the indisposition of his countrymen to the necessary restraint of regular authority, and the proper machinery of executive government.

The difficulty, you will remember, is, and it is most intelligible, how to restrain the selfish passions of mankind, how to procure any attention to the common obligations of law and justice, when the former ministers of law and justice have been displaced and lost their authority.

To return to the instance of America. One of my lectures on the American Revolution was chiefly intended to show you, how much Washington suffered, how much the best interests, present and future, of the great continent of America were endangered from that absence of executive power, which necessarily took place, when the contest with Great Britain was terminated. The difficulty will always occur. In the case before us, the patriots of the French Revolution had talked of the sovereign will of the people, and had made such large references to their wisdom and their power, that the multitude seem to have taken them at their word, and to have concluded that every thing, that was agreeable to them, must necessarily be right. All government is instituted for the happiness of the people; this is the first step, and one of which there can be no doubt; but the second is, that of this happiness they can be themselves the only and the best judges; a position totally different, and which requires many limitations, distinctions, and explanations, and which, when thrown out to the multitude, as it continually was, by the patriotic leaders in the most unqualified manner, could lead only to those unhappy excesses, which it is the grief of every friend to the liberties of mankind to read and hear of, and which constitute so much of the history of the French Revolution.

I have now made three distinct accusations. I have accused the people of Paris (the multitude at least) of taking

the law into their own hands, and in defiance of what authority yet remained, of massacring those who had offended them in the public streets. I have accused the common people all over France, when the authority of the old government was removed, of committing the most disgraceful and cruel outrages on the property and persons of the aristocracy of the country. I have accused the leaders of the Revolution of addressing such language to the people (that of their sovereignty and their sovereign will) as could only be fatal to the people and to themselves; such as was unworthy of them as statesmen; such as could never have been necessary, if they had acted during the first weeks of the Revolution in a spirit of temper and moderation and made the best of their case with the king, who was, according to the limits of his views and feelings, as patriotic as themselves.

Now, these are accusations which you must consider in the detail of the history, as you read it for yourselves. Of the two first there can be no doubt; of the last there may, and it will require your best attention. But even of this last position, that the leaders used fatal language to the people, the truth is sufficiently apparent; and after the first lessons that are given to rulers, the next are, those that are afforded to all who love freedom, and more particularly those who are ready to resist, or even overturn, a government for the sake of bettering the condition of their country. Patriots have their temptations and their mistakes, as well as those who govern; and you must keep your attention directed to the faults that were committed (and by them committed) on the subject of executive power. The great cause of the French Revolution failed for want of executive power. This is indeed a difficult subject, and one which I ought not thus to decide and anticipate—this conduct, I mean, of the Assembly with respect to the executive power; but this at least I may say, that the first and most important point of all others to be accomplished when the king had resigned himself to the Revolution, in the Hotel de Ville, was the immediate establishment (more particularly in Paris) of something like an effective power. The next point was, when the constitution came afterwards to be regularly settled, to make the executive power sufficiently strong. Now, the Constituent Assembly did neither. These

are, I think, the two great lessons of instruction for you during all the earlier parts of the French Revolution, during the sitting of the Constituent Assembly; their failures on the subject of executive power.

You will see a very good description of the situation of Paris, immediately after the king's visit, in Groenvelt. You must read this part of the history also in Bailly's Memoirs, and in the Memoirs of the Marquis de Ferrieres. There is a good account in Dodsley's Annual Register. And now you will observe, that there seems to have been in Paris, all through the Revolution, a set of wretches among the multitude always ready to undertake any projects of insurrection and bloodshed: these were always considered as the followers and hired ruffians of the Duke of Orleans, though I know not with what sufficient reason: money may have been given, and a certain effect in consequence produced, but no such effect, I conceive, as was unhappily witnessed; and it is quite out of the question to suppose that such a spirit and such excesses, as were witnessed, could have been produced by money; far different, and far more awful, was the origin of such frightful phenomena in the history of our species. There was in the houses of legislature also, at all times and from the first, a party that were always urging every thing to extremes, and seemed to have no relish for any counsels but those of fury and violence. Now men of both these descriptions, whether men of bad designs and desperate characters, or men inflamed to a sort of madness by the intoxicating nature of new opinions, men both like the one and like the other, must always be expected to appear, must always be taken into account in all revolutions. They are naturally the favourites of the multitude, and it is very difficult, it is almost impossible, to save a community from their destructive influence. You will see them in action all through the Revolution; the low party of the Constituent, the republicans of the Legislative Assembly, the mountain of the Convention, the leaders of the Jacobin club, the demagogues of the Palais Royal. Observe their speeches, the decrees they propose, their conduct; these (after the first lessons have been given) are the next lessons of the Revolution. Such men will arise, will necessarily be found in public mobs,

in public assemblies; but these are the men against whom real patriots, the real friends of liberty, are to be more particularly on their guard. I must now make a painful reference, in some slight and passing manner, to subjects of this nature.

M. Bailly gives a regular account of the massacre of M. de Berthier. He presided that day at the town hall. All the way to Paris, it was but too clear, as M. de Berthier was brought along, under the conduct of the civil power, that no civil power would be sufficient for his protection. The savages that had just murdered his father-in-law, Foulon, brought the head upon a pike, close to the carriage where he was sitting; M. de la Riviere, his conductor, exerted himself very humanely, made him turn aside his eyes, and told him it was the head of M. de Quesnay; but the sufferings of the unhappy man were extreme, and M. de la Riviere was unable to lodge him, according to his orders, in the prison of the Abbaye, and he could only bring him to the town hall. M. Bailly had procured a strong guard from La Fayette; it was their object to remove Berthier to prison, if possible, preparatory to his trial; but even while they were interrogating the prisoner, the blood-thirsty impatience of the crowd had become uncontrolable, and he no sooner appeared on the steps, than he was torn away from the guard, and massacred on the spot. A dragoon brought his heart to the council; he was repulsed with horror. The multitude next attempted to bring his head on a pike, and were already on the stair-case; the helpless committee were obliged to send word, that no admission could be allowed, as they were, at the moment, sitting and engaged in business. "In these terrible moments," says M. Bailly, "pretexts were to be made use of to escape from these atrocities; there was a real danger," he continues, "to those (it was useless to brave it) who attempted to speak the language of justice and humanity; the people could hear nothing; whoever thought not with them was supposed a traitor."

This is an awful specimen of the rude passions of mankind. The dragoon, however, it is said, was pursued to death by his indignant comrades, and was killed in the first duel with one of them. The honour of the military character was justly felt;

and these, the very murderers of Foulon and Berthier, brought their money and trinkets to the Assembly. These incidents speak something in favour of human nature. But in the notes to Bailly's Memoirs, you will see a sort of pamphlet, or hand-bill, that appeared at the time, written by some bad man, but one evidently of intelligence and of literary talents. What are we to say, what are we to think of the frail nature of the peace of society, and of the danger of loosening its bands, when even such a man could deliver to his fellow creatures a detail of the abominations of these massacres, decorated by the refined expressions of pleasantry and good writing? "But to lose no more time," says this hand-bill, "we strangled him; and then, as he was an ex-administrator, we took off his head, in a manner the most respectful; we took from him his heart and his entrails; the head walked off on the one side, and the body on the other,—the first time that these two intimate connections had found themselves separated from each other." Other passages, and more disgusting, occur: the whole is properly given by the present editor of Bailly, to show to what an extent the human mind may be hardened by political fury.

After all, it is very strange that no resistance could be made to such atrocious proceedings, and it seems difficult to suppose, that the mere mob were alone concerned; not that, if they were, this would be any justification of the Assembly. Where was all the force of the capital? Why did not the Assembly call aloud, in the cause of every thing that should have been dear to them? When the citizens of Paris, a few days before, expected their town to be attacked by Broglio and the army, the body of electors had assembled, had created a regular force, La Fayette was at the head of it; afterwards when the king repaired to the capital, wherever he looked, he had seen the population under arms; where were they all? They must have constituted much of the respectable part of the population of Paris. Efforts were made by La Fayette and by Bailly, by the military and civil powers, all in vain. What the editors of Bailly have to say is only this, that at the time of these massacres the armed force was not properly organized; that the officers scarcely knew each other, and that their persons were scarcely known to those who were to

obey them; that it was an irregular mass, divided in sentiment, over which no general influence could be exercised. Divided in sentiment, but how? on an occasion like this? To be able to say no more than this for the people of Paris is to say but little. La Fayette, it is added, had saved from popular fury, at different times, seventeen persons just before: a melancholy addition this to the crimes of the populace, and a new cause of reproach to the Assembly and the respectable part of the community.

La Fayette on every occasion, it will be found, all circumstances considered, did every thing that could possibly be done by a brave and good man, often at great personal risk, often with very eminent success. In this instance, La Fayette was not wanting to his own character, or to his country; the cause of civil order and of the law was evidently at issue. He must have been deeply mortified at this early specimen of the Revolution. He wrote to Bailly, and to the districts, to throw up his command, and he was able to write to them a calm and reasonable letter. Every effort was made to appease his just indignation, and he at last resumed the command, as he had always secretly intended, on a promise of proper obedience to him, given by the electors and deputies of the districts in the name of the citizens of Paris; "that his zeal," they said, "seconded by their common efforts, might conduct to perfectionthe great work of the public liberty."

How ill this promise was observed, is but too well known; these massacres produced some sensation in the districts of Paris, and occasioned a seasonable proclamation, but they should have far more powerfully affected the National Assembly. It was evident how dreadful was the monster that they had unchained, while endeavouring to free their country from a system of bad government and the oppressions of a court; but no proper sentiment seems to have been awakened in the democratic party. The virtuous M. de Lally Tollendal exerted himself with no adequate success. This distinguished patriot had taken a reasonable view of the situation of France, even before these dreadful events. "From the point where we then were," he says, "immediately after the king's visit to the town hall, it was evident that nothing more was to be

feared for liberty, but the projects of faction, and the dangers of anarchy; the National Assembly had only to put itself on its guard against the excess of its power. There was not a moment to lose to re-establish public order; news had been already received that the commotions, which had shaken the capital, had been felt not only in the neighbouring cities, but in the distant provinces."

With his hands full of letters, that attested the excesses every where committed with impunity, Tollendal repaired to the National Assembly, and proposed his proclamation on the 20th. On the first and on the second reading his project was received with acclamations, but to his astonishment, he saw a party rise to oppose it. "According to one," says he, "my sensibility had seduced my reason; these fires, these imprisonments, these assassinations, were crosses that we should learn to support, because we ought to have expected them:—according to another, my imagination had created dangers which did not exist: there was no danger but in my motion; danger for liberty, because it would take from the people a salutary fear and alarm for their freedom, which should rather be encouraged than suppressed; danger for the Assembly, that would see Paris declare against it."

"The next day," continues Lally Tollendal, (the 21st of July,) "I was waked by the cries of grief. I saw enter my chamber a young man, pale, disfigured, who hastened eagerly to throw his arms around me, and who said to me, as he sobbed aloud, 'Sir, you have passed fifteen years of your life in defending the memory of your own father; save the life of mine, let him be heard by his judges.' It was the son of the unfortunate Berthier. I conducted him instantly to the president of the Assembly. As ill fortune would have it, there was no sitting in the morning; in the evening it was too late. The father-in-law and the son-in-law had been, in the mean time, in the course of the day, torn in pieces." Such is the account of Tollendal. Such are the scenes of a Revolution.

"You may imagine," continues Tollendal, "that at the very first sitting I hastened to fix the general attention on this horrible event. I spoke in the name of a son whose father had been just massacred; and Barnave, a son who was in mourning for his own father at the time, dared to reproach me

with feeling, when I should only reason. He added, 'Was then the blood, which has been shed, so very precious?' And every time he raised his arms in the midst of his sanguinary declamations, he showed to every eye the mournful marks of his own recent afflictions, the weepers (for his own father) that made a part of his dress, the incontestable witnesses of his barbarous insensibility." You will see hereafter in the history, that Lally Tollendal at last rushed forth from the Constituent Assembly, unable to bear the presence and the language of the democratic party any longer.

The conduct of Barnave, on this question, shows the republican character in that odious point of view in which it is but too ready to present itself. You remember the incidents of the Roman story. These often mislead; and cool cruelty is sometimes supposed to be virtue, and humanity to be weakness. But it is agreeable to remember, that Barnave lived to melt over the misfortunes of the king and queen, and to show the more amiable feelings of our common nature. But no such amiable, such indispensable feelings were witnessed in an important portion of the National Assembly. Lally Tollendal was expostulated with, checked, and opposed. "I discharge my conscience," he cried aloud, "of the evils that will result from your refusals of what I propose. I wash my hands of the blood which will flow." Cries of fury resounded on every side, and Mirabeau observed with a ferocious look, "Nations must have their victims; to the calamities of individuals one must be hardened; it is only at this price that one can become a citizen." Mirabeau afterwards addressed a letter on the general subject to his constituents; and he called forth all the powers of his eloquence to palliate the excesses of the people, and rather to throw the blame on their former rulers. Admitting that there was too much of truth in some of his remarks on their former rulers, this was surely not a time to have produced them.

"Observe now," said he, "how many have been the causes that concurred to produce this explosion, these massacres (he enumerated many of these causes), in short," said he, "two centuries of oppression, public and private, political and fiscal, feudal and judicial, crowned by that most horrible conspiracy (Broglio and the court) which the annals of the

world will for ever transmit to memory; these are what have so provoked the people; the people have punished a few of those whom the public voice has declared the authors of these evils. Let those who have so managed as to fear no other tribunal, fear this of the public.

"It would make a volume to show by examples that in these seasons of severity exercised upon government, governments but reap the harvest of their own iniquities. The people are despised, and are then expected to be always gentle and passive; but no, it is instruction which must be drawn from these events, the injustice of the other classes to the people makes them find justice in barbarity itself."

Such were some of the passages in the letter of Mirabeau. The oppressions of the old government are here seen, no doubt, but extremely exaggerated and very unseasonably produced, even admitting that there is but too much truth in the moral which he draws. What could be the interpretation or effect of such observations at that particular juncture? He who justifies a crime is little to be distinguished from the criminal; and this is a fault of constant occurrence among men, especially when parties run high. The proclamation that was issued by the Assembly turned out to be spiritless and inefficient. The Assembly, in this proclamation, after stating (reasonably enough) its own merits with the public, those of the king, and the consequences of such proceedings, informed the public that a tribunal would be immediately created for the regular trial of cases of treason; and they were then invited to peace (*invited* to peace), to the maintenance of order and the public tranquillity, to the confidence which they owed their king and their representatives, and that respect for the laws, without which (it was observed) there can be no liberty. "These were the sentiments and principles," says M. Bailly, "of the National Assembly;" and he seems to think them so adequate to the occasion, as to be quite pleased with his fellow legislators. He pronounces them excellent.

The proclamation issued was the one that had been proposed by Lally, even before the murders of Foulon and Berthier had taken place, but the most important paragraph of it, even as it first stood, was left out; the paragraph was this: "that punishment the most just, pronounced on crimes the

most clear, became itself an injustice and a crime, unless ordered by the law, and the judge, the proper organ of the law."

Once more, and to close for a time the subject.

The scenes I have alluded to are highly disgraceful to the Assembly, and all the constituted authorities of Paris. They show, no doubt, the necessity of some executive power. This is the first lesson; but more is to be considered. The two unhappy men who were massacred were literally torn in pieces by the multitude. Their heads were carried on pikes, and led in a sort of triumphal procession through the streets. A fiend in the shape of a man, as I have already mentioned, actually thrust his hand into the entrails of one of these unfortunate victims, tore out the heart, and brought it to the council table, where the committee was sitting in the town hall. These are the great facts to be remembered.

Now horrors of this kind, and they are innumerable through the French Revolution, show, as I have mentioned, in the first place, the necessity of some executive government; but in the second place, they have been always considered as the most decisive proofs that can possibly be produced to show the necessity, after all, of the Revolution itself, and the badness of the old French government. What must have been the rulers, or at least the system of government, when such were the people? What further justification can be required? Now whether this rapid mode of reasoning be or be not entirely conclusive, one thing must, I think, be admitted; that the moral situation of the lower orders in France at the time of the Revolution, forms an eternal answer to those who would give the people no instruction and no freedom. How is the brute to be taken out of the human animal but by the influence of that moral and religious knowledge, which alone distinguish him from other animals in the desert. But give him instruction, it will be answered, and he will then be a more intelligent and discerning critic on the vices and follies of his superiors. No doubt they must behave better; and why not? Is not this in other words to say, that the community will in every class and in every direction be advanced and improved.

But the community will never be safe, it will be again

answered, if every man is thus to be converted into a judge of his betters and erected into a statesman. This is a gross exaggeration: the generality of mankind must be occupied in making provision for themselves and their families; the knowledge they can acquire must be very limited, little more than what may save them from the brutal vices; the political power which will sufficiently gratify them and make them respectable in their own eyes and those of their superiors is in truth, generally speaking, and in any ordinary state of the world, very little; and at all events the community can never for a moment be safe, when the multitude are degraded and despised. They will, on some opportunity or other, rise, as they did in France, first in the Jacquerie, next at the Revolution; on both occasions, but too much after the manner of slaves in a West India island. And even in regular and good governments, like our own, in times of any difficulty or danger, the visitation of a scarcity, a fall in the price of labour, a stoppage of the manufactures, to whom has a factious demagogue the best chance of successfully addressing himself—to an ignorant creature that can understand no voice but the clamour of his wants and passions, or to one that has been accustomed to consider occasionally the nature of his duties, moral and religious, occasionally to exercise his thoughts, occasionally, in the language of the poet, "to look before and after?" Again, to which of the two can a wise and good man address himself in these seasons of public calamity with the best chance of success? Which is most likely to understand what even a wise and good man can then only say—the wisdom of patience; the necessity of suffering; that governments cannot perform impossibilities; that the best will be abused; the wisest make mistakes; that perfection, that happiness, in our sublunary state, are not to be expected;—of such things which of the two is likely to be the best auditor, the ignorant man or the more improved?

But to return to France, and to the subject of the want of executive power. The Revolution failed not a little on account of the tumultuary mobs of Paris. The student's attention should always be directed to this point; why and how it came about that there was no proper executive power in the metropolis and in the country; why the Constituent Assembly never seemed sufficiently aware of the necessity of one; why

democratic principles of the most unqualified nature so uniformly prevailed.

This subject of executive power is at all times so important, and is so intimately connected with every part of the French Revolution, that I will endeavour, in the remainder of the lecture, to furnish you with such particulars of a general nature, as may give you some notion of what it was, during the period we are now considering, and long after.

A sort of slight history of it seems the following.

The first executive power that existed in France prior to the Revolution, was of course the ancient power, prerogative, and authority of the crown. The king was, under the old régime, the great executive, and indeed legislative power.

But this executive power grew weaker as the Revolution proceeded, and might be said to be suspended, when the king was thought to have brought up Marshal Broglio and his troops to put down the Revolution and to subdue Paris. His authority, on the failure of this measure, was virtually at an end, and a new sort of executive power was created.

Recourse was had to the body of electors, about three hundred in number, those who originally chose the deputies that were sent to the States General, and they became the first magistracy, or executive and civil power; and, in the revolutionary state of things then existing, were highly fitted to be so. They arranged and formed the military force, that appeared as by enchantment, and probably saved Paris, not only from Marshal Broglio, but from internal pillage and destruction at that terrible crisis.

But it was afterwards found that they and the military force, with all the assistance of La Fayette and Bailly, were insufficient to secure the peace and order of the community; they had not been able, or they had not sufficiently exerted themselves, to prevent the massacres we have lately alluded to; and the real executive power became little to be distinguished from the mere will of the multitude, the will of the sovereign people. This was in truth the law; there was no other, and none could be worse. The electors were not at ease or pleased with their situation; they seemed to have understood the nature of their fellow-citizens, the Parisians, perfectly well; they were not very desirous to retain their authority; and they therefore persuaded the sixty districts of

the capital to elect each two deputies, who should constitute a temporary administration, make proper provision for a future municipal government, and being the acknowledged representatives of the community, could assume the appearance of regular legitimate authority, according to the new opinions.

These one hundred and twenty deputies then constituted the second municipal authority or acting executive power of the capital; and these might have succeeded eventually in maintaining some appearance of order in the community, but for one unfortunate circumstance: it was this; they were the immediate representatives each of their own districts; and these districts had each of them, most unhappily, General Assemblies. In these Assemblies every inhabitant was permitted to speak (each inhabitant, a Frenchman), permitted, I say, to speak and vote. These Assemblies, in this manner, framed resolutions, which were laws in their own districts, issued proclamations, and granted passports. They became themselves, rather than the deputies, the effective executive power; and the result of this was, that the great city of Paris became at once tormented with sixty republics, each with a General Assembly, where all the citizens, meeting, speaking, voting at the same time, each Assembly became a cave of Æolus, but with no master spirit to control its inmates. This, then, was a dreadful species of executive power or municipal authority. Such Assemblies, with such representatives, the Assemblies constantly sitting, the representatives the mere organs of their will,—this was a miserable specimen of the sovereignty of the people, a melancholy caricature of the doctrines of freedom.

Groenvelt, an enthusiastic friend of liberty, who was on the spot at the time, thus expresses himself:—"The noise which prevails in these Assemblies is enough to distract any one who is not accustomed to it. Every speech is followed or interrupted by the loudest and most clamorous applause, or the most tumultuous signs of disapprobation. The president of one of these Assemblies, finding it impossible to command silence by any other means, has stationed a drummer behind him; and when all is noise, tumult, and confusion, he gives the signal to beat the drum till tranquillity is restored."

Groenvelt, however, finishes the paragraph by a consolatory reference to the usual subject of vituperation, the old government. "If a man will have his house repaired," says he, "he must not complain that he is *incommoded* during the operation by dust and noise." "Incommoded" seems a very faint term to be used by one who had been present at these Assemblies.

When such was the great source of executive power, that is, of the authority of the community, the next step in the progress of destruction, as the student will easily conceive, would be, that these Assemblies would fall under the management of wrong-headed, furious demagogues; that sensible people in disgust would withdraw (a constant but most lamentable consequence at all times of a disorderly public assembly); that these demagogues, in each district, would communicate and correspond with each other, and at last would fall into a great united club (as they did, the Jacobin club); be there joined by the more violent members of the National Assembly; and, by forming a similar organization in the great towns and all over the kingdom, influence these Assemblies, organize these districts, and in fact constitute the real effective government of the empire, and give the law to the National Assembly itself, under whatever form or name it appeared. All this took place.

Now a more tremendous executive (or rather legislative and executive power) than this, to exist in any country, no imagination can conceive. It was highly fitted, it must be allowed, to beat off an invading enemy; to raise armies, that might be let loose upon the rest of Europe: but it was the least fitted in the world to build up the regular constitution, and lay the foundations of the future peace and prosperity of a great empire. You will often hear of the municipality of Paris, as you read the history; that is, of the body composed of the representatives of the sixty districts, each district having its own Assembly. You will often hear of the Jacobin club: bear in mind this slight sketch of these dreadful ministers of authority that I have given you; the nature of the power, its organization, and extent; and all the enormities that disgraced the Revolution, and destroyed all the efforts of good men, will not surprise you.

But other circumstances must be mentioned that concurred to the same end; concurred to the debasement and destruction of all regular executive power, of all the proper authority of the community.

"There is a very numerous class of men," says Groenvelt, "in this metropolis, who, though they do not frequent the Assemblies of the districts, are by no means indifferent about politics, but hold Assemblies of their own in public places, in the Palais Royal, in the streets, wherever they happen accidentally to collect togēther. They are, in general, men of distressed circumstances, with little or no employment; some supporting a precarious existence by alms, condemned to a life of misery, and consequently restless, dissatisfied, greedy after news, or rather impatient for change. Nearly one hundred thousand individuals (of the upper ranks) are supposed to have emigrated. Judge from this circumstance what an army of servants out of place, labourers out of work, men wholly dependent on the luxuries of the great, and now stripped of all resources, must have been turned loose upon the public. Again: the levity and inconstancy of the Parisians had been always proverbial; so had their gross ignorance; so had their blind credulity: and yet they were suspicious in the extreme; they imagined treachery or villainy in the most indifferent, innocent, or praiseworthy actions; so that no men could preserve their favour or conduct their business.

"Falsehood," says Groenvelt, "is the constant and the favourite resource of the cabals which prevail here. You cannot form an idea of the impudence with which the most palpable lies are published and propagated among the people. The most positive assertions, the most minute detail of facts, the strongest appearance of probability, are made to accompany the grossest falsehoods. Foulon and Bezenval were the victims of pretended letters, of which one thousand copies, but no original, was ever seen. The convent of Montmartre has been twice beset by twenty or thirty thousand men, who threatened it with destruction for having engrossed the provender of Paris; it was searched, and there was scarcely found provision enough to supply the house. At one moment it is affirmed that the aristocratical conspirators have thrown

a great quantity of bread into the Seine; at another, that they mowed the green corn. The public is overwhelmed with lies and calumnies."

Nor was this credulity and this unhappy suspiciousness of temper confined to Paris. These prevailed all over the kingdom, and instances the most ludicrous might be produced.

Now I must turn for an instant to observe, that the picture of general ignorance in the people of France, as you see, is very complete; and yet, as you also see, the old government was not in this way made secure, as it should have been, according to those who contend against the instruction of the lower orders: quite the contrary; there was no chance left for it. But in this general state of public ignorance the political press seems to have been active and unprincipled to the most extraordinary degree. In Paris, thirteen or even sixteen pamphlets a day were no matter of surprise. These innumerable productions were spread from the capital through every part of the kingdom with the greatest dispatch; it is said they were given away: a circumstance which, like many others, leads to the belief of an Orleans faction existing to a certain extent at least, and exercising all their abominable machinations for the propagation of disorder. Lastly, as a supereminent difficulty for good patriots to struggle with, a scarcity, a famine, was sorely felt in Paris, and more or less in other parts of France, during these earlier parts of the Revolution. Demagogues, and revolutionists, and all the artificers of confusion, can have no instrument in their hands like this—the rich man eating bread while the poor man is famished. How vain to talk to the latter of order and law! how easy, of the necessity of insurrection and a better government! Bailly mentions, that he was often uncertain at midnight of the proper supply for the city the next day. To all these causes of disorder and calamity must, I conceive, after all, be added the immense fortune of the Duke of Orleans, and the manner in which he suffered it to be employed. And lastly, and above all, the nature of the new opinions, intoxicating alike to the speaker and the hearer, to the writer and the reader, to the thousands of demagogues and literary men who supposed they were already wiser than all who had gone before them, and to the crowds and multitudes, more particu-

larly those, rising into life, who thought they were now to become so. The very nature of these opinions was to suppose that there was a new era to commence in the religion, morals, and governments of mankind; and when, in this state of things, even the wise and the people of property seemed no longer to respect any established system of conduct or opinion, and openly to avow it, what was to become of the mass of the community?

You will now, I hope, be able to form some general notion of the state of Paris and of France when the king adopted the Revolution, and for some time after; a notion sufficiently clear to enable you to understand what I am delivering on the subject of executive power in this lecture; and the question now is, What was done by the Constituent Assembly from the moment that all the regular and legitimate power was transferred from the king to them? what was done for the preservation of their own consequence; for the security of the public; for the very success of any measures they could possibly prepare; for the improvement of the constitution of their country? Are they or are they not to be blamed for their want of sense and spirit? And if Lally Tollendal, and others, were helpless, and unable to carry proper measures with the Assembly, are the friends of freedom to be warned or not by the example of the Assembly? What has been the event is now known, and what the event *could not but be* might have been foreseen (so it must now be thought) by all intelligent men at the time. I do not deny their difficulties, but they were intoxicated with the new opinions, as men will always be; and they made no efforts, or thought none necessary, to form a proper executive power for their own defence, the protection of the community, in fact, the protection of their own Revolution.

You will of course consider the subject more thoroughly hereafter. It was on the whole a most perilous and unhappy situation of affairs, though it appeared not so at the time to the friends of liberty in this country, in America, and in Europe. The question in reality was, whether the National Assembly (for this was the only hope), consisting of so many enlightened and respectable men, could restrain the general ardour, and could by their own virtues, wisdom, and mode-

ration, compensate for all the tendencies to evil which we have thus briefly and very imperfectly described.

As I leave the subject, and before I conclude my lecture, I must announce to you the subject of the lecture of to-morrow —one, indeed, connected with the subject of this lecture, the want of executive power.

The truth was, that the most dreadful outrages had followed all through France the first success of what must be consided as the first insurrection of the people, on the 14th of July.

A report was made to the Assembly on the 3rd of August; the committee stated, to use their own words, that "letters and memorials received from all the provinces had proved, that property of every kind was every where the prey of the most atrocious plunderers; that throughout the country the houses were burned, the convents destroyed, and farms given up to pillage; imposts, seignorial services, all, every thing is annihilated; the laws are without force, the magistrates without authority, and justice is no longer more than a phantom, which it is in vain to seek in the courts."

Such was the language of the report made to the Assembly on the 3rd.

Dreadful accounts had also reached many individual members of the Assembly on the morning of the 4th.

The question then was, what was the course to be pursued? The result was the proceedings of the night of the 4th of August: among the most memorable in the course of the Revolution. They must be well considered by you in every part, and I must call your attention to them in my lecture of to-morrow. They must be well observed, because they are connected with the nature of the rights and privileges of property, particularly ecclesiastical property. They show how these subjects are naturally affected by revolutions. These proceedings of the night of the 4th of August put an end, in a word, to all feudal rights and privileges, and led at last to the destruction of the property of the clergy in France and of her ecclesiastical orders; and, as a specimen of revolutions, and the reasonings and consequences by which they are accompanied, are for ever memorable in the history of mankind.

# LECTURE XV.

## FOURTH OF AUGUST. DESTRUCTION OF FEUDAL RIGHTS AND CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT.

THE governments of Europe were all founded on feudal principles; but customs continue long after the original reasons of them have ceased, and nothing could be less agreeable to the views and reasonings of a philosopher than the rights and observances, which had been thus transmitted from one generation to another, and, however modified and disguised, had thus descended down to us, even so late as the close of the eighteenth century.

With these feudal notions, it was impossible that the new opinions should not be in a state of hostility from the first. The distinctions of society itself were scarcely tolerated by Rousseau. There was then little chance for the oppressions of the feudal system, when men began to speculate upon the nature of society and the happiness of their fellow creatures; and with all our reverence for antiquity, and whatever be the difficulties and dangers which are connected with the breaking up of the habits and customs of a community, still we must allow that the feudal system, as it then existed in France, was a burden from which it was very naturally the wish of the patriots of France to deliver their country. The new philosophy was more especially anxious (and very properly so) to elevate the condition of the lower orders; and, as applied to this part of society, the feudal system assumed no appearances but those of oppression and injustice. Reference must be had to some sufferings of this kind in the people, or we shall be unable to explain some of the outrages that took place, and not indeed in Paris and the great towns, but through the interior of France, in the earlier periods of the Revolution. These sufferings of the peasantry have, I appre-

hend, been overstated by very respectable writers; among the rest, our own Arthur Young.

It may be observed, for instance, that the chateaux and the title deeds might be burned, because the cultivators of the soil, the métayers, were always in debt to the proprietors. Still, sufferings and oppressions to a certain extent must be supposed. The most dreadful disorders took place.

Accounts to this effect had reached the members of the Constituent Assembly, as I have already mentioned, from all parts of France; and it now became an object of serious anxiety to all those who had privileges or possessions, to determine immediately what could best be done, as well for themselves as for others. Many letters had been received on the 4th of August; and when the Assembly met in the evening, strong symptoms of vexation, anxiety, and terror, were visible in the countenances of the members, particularly those belonging to the two first orders.

But you will see, on the slightest reflection, the difficulty that belongs to the subject.

Privileges, however fantastic and unjust, if long enjoyed, become a species of right and property; they are retained as such; they are often more dear to their possessors than more substantial goods: to be required to give them up is thought very unreasonable; to have them taken away by force, very unjust. A dispute much of this kind led to our own civil war between Charles I. and his parliaments. One of the greatest merits of the long parliament was the clearing away from landed property some of the inconvenient and oppressive usages of the feudal system; a merit which the parliament of Charles II., without acknowledgment, immediately assumed, as its own, on the Restoration.

People may no doubt surrender, if they please, their privileges and enjoyments, but they are not very likely to do so; and, therefore, the first operation of revolutions is in general to exercise compulsion upon them, and thus to fill the houses and families of many distinguished individuals, sometimes of whole classes of the community, with misery, indignation, and complaints.

When the Assembly met on the evening of the 4th of August, some proposed resolutions were read by Target; the general import of which was, that the ancient laws, imposts,

&c. &c., were to remain, till new modified by the Assembly; but the Viscount de Noailles seemed aware that no such temporizing conduct in the Assembly would now be sufficient, and he instantly arose to propose measures, which alone could produce, he said, the public tranquillity, and which went immediately to ordain that all public charges should be equally supported by the whole community; all taxes levied in proportion to income; above all, that all feudal claims should be redeemable at a fair valuation, and that corvées and all rights of the lords to the services of the peasantry, with other grievances of the kind, should be abolished.

You will see his reasonable speech in the notes to the Memoirs of Bailly. He was immediately seconded by the Duc d'Aguillon, whose speech created even more surprise, on account of his very ample estate and extensive royalties. This speech appears to me so humane and yet so considerate, and to touch with so much propriety on all the leading points of the subject, that I will offer to your remembrance some of its leading passages.

"Gentlemen," said the duke, "there is no one who must not groan over the scenes of horror which are now exhibited in France: it is not only that brigands, with arms in their hands, are enriching themselves at the expense of the public calamity; in many provinces, the whole population forms a species of league to destroy the chateaux, to ravage the lands, and, above all, to possess itself of the places where the titles to feudal properties are deposited. Men are every where eager to throw off a yoke, that has for so many ages pressed upon them so heavily; and it must be confessed, gentlemen, that this insurrection, though in itself to be blamed, as all violent aggression must be, may still find its excuse in those vexations of which the people are the victims. The proprietors of the fiefs and seignories are themselves, indeed, but seldom to be blamed for the excesses of which their vassals complain, but their agents are often without pity; and the unhappy cultivator groans under the barbarous remains of those feudal laws which still subsist in France. These rights, it cannot be concealed, are a property, and all property is sacred; but then they are burdensome to the people, and all the world agree, how heavy is this oppression.

"In this enlightened age, when a sound philosophy has resumed

its empire; at this fortunate epoch, when united for the good of the public, and disengaged from every personal interest, we labour together for the regeneration of the state, it appears to me, that it is for us, before we establish the constitution expected from us by the nation, it is for us, I say, to prove to all our fellow citizens, that our intention and our wish is, to anticipate their desires, and to establish, as soon as we can, that equality of rights, which ought to exist amongst all men, and which can alone assure to them their freedom. I doubt not that these proprietors of fiefs, these lords of the seignories, far from their refusing their assent to this great truth, will of themselves be disposed to make every sacrifice of their rights that justice can require: they have already renounced their privileges and pecuniary exemptions. One cannot, at this moment, demand from them the pure and simple renunciation of their feudal rights: these rights are their property, of many individuals their only possession; and justice requires from us, not to exact the delivering up of any property from those, to whom we have not first granted a just indemnity; and I therefore propose, for the sake of rendering them duly sensible that we are not inattentive to their interests, that we should offer them a compensation for the sacrifice of their own convenience to the public good." He then went on to propose resolutions agreeably to those of the Duke de Noailles; the import of which was, that the National Assembly, considering, moreover, that the feudal and seignorial rights are an oppressive tribute, which injures agriculture and desolates the country, but unable to conceal from itself that all rights are in reality a property, and that all property is inviolable, resolves, &c. &c. " that these rights were to be redeemable after a fixed standard, accommodated by the Assembly to the nature of the case," &c. &c. &c.

Expressions of joy and exclamation followed (and very reasonably) these very generous proposals on the part of the viscount and the duke.

A deputy then arose, Leguen de Kerengal, clad in the habit of a peasant, and gave the Assembly a very full and eloquent description of the feudal abuses.

" You would have prevented," said he, " these burnings of the chateaux, if you had been more early in declaring, that

the terrible instruments of oppression, which they contain, were now to exist no more. Let us be just, and let us bring here and annihilate for ever these feudal rights and titles, that outrage all modesty and humanity; that degrade the human species; that tie men to a car or a plough, and make them draw it, as if they were beasts; that make men pass whole nights in beating the ponds, lest the frogs, by their noise, should disturb the slumbers of the voluptuous lord. Who is there in an enlightened age like this, that would not make an expiatory bonfire of these infamous parchments? who that would not seize a torch and offer them up as a sacrifice on the altar of the public good? There is no peace for France till there is an end of these things: tell the people that you acknowledge the injustice of these rights, acquired in times of ignorance and darkness. You have not a moment to lose.

"The fall of empires has often been announced by less noise than you now hear: do you mean to give laws to France only when in a state of devastation?"

From these few passages, you will, for the present, sufficiently conceive the nature of a speech, that was followed by redoubled applauses, and by acclamations too loud, to leave any chance of a hearing to those among the nobles who in vain protested, and probably with very great reason, against the truth of the orator's assertions.

This orator was soon after followed by another, Laponte, who completed the picture of feudal tyranny, by the description, probably a most unfair and exaggerated description, of abominations still more disgusting, and even talked of a right which the lords in certain districts were possessed of, actually to warm their feet in the entrails of their vassals when returning cold from the chase. The nobles here, as may well be supposed, could contain themselves no longer; and amid their natural cries of remonstrance, and the equally loud cries of horror and indignation of the Assembly, the uproar was so great, that the orator sat down. Each deputy, as you will now easily imagine, rushed forward to make sacrifices of his particular rights and privileges, many more sacrifices than could be enumerated by any writer or observer of these transactions, and many more than could by us be understood.

The night was, no doubt, a night of tumult and disorder,

and the Assembly had little the appearance of the Assembly of a great nation, a meeting of legislators, who were, by their deliberate wisdom, to regenerate an empire. All this is true; and this, and much more than this, you will read in the histories and memoirs that I have offered to your attention. It has been called the night of dupes, and I cannot but allow, that rights and institutions, of whatever kind, if found existing in a community, should be treated with a little more ceremony than was now paid; and every accommodation should be given, and every respect shown, to the convenience and feelings of all concerned. Considerations of this kind you will see strongly urged in the Annual Register, and some of the French works; but it would have been well for France and for mankind, if the Assembly had committed no greater faults than those of this memorable night, and if their enthusiasm, their folly, if you please, had been always not only so noble and so generous in itself, but directed to purposes equally just and intelligent.

Whoever considers subjects of the kind now before us, will find, that they at last resolve themselves into questions of feeling. Why am I to give up my right? says a possessor of an ancient privilege. You should feel for the public good, it is replied; what other answer can be made him? If he *does* feel, he is a man of virtue, and to be had in honour; and so are these patriots of the Constituent Assembly. Men act from mixed motives: it is impossible to enter into all that may have affected the conduct of the different nobles and privileged persons who distinguished themselves on this occasion; it is never very useful to occupy ourselves with disquisitions of this nature. The main feelings and principles concerned, were generosity, humanity, disinterestedness, a sense of justice, a sympathy with others, an interest in the public good, a hope for the improvement and regeneration of France; patriotism, in every sense of the word that can belong to it. The natural impetuosity of the French character was no doubt shown; perhaps, that unhappy taste for scenic effect, by which it is so degraded; but, on the whole, humanity has here much to be proud of, and an effort was now made for the happiness of the people of France, the benefit of which France now feels, and will never cease to feel, while the very distinctions

of society subsist, while the land is cultivated and property enjoyed, whatever be the fortunes of her government.

The Viscount de Montmorency at last proposed, that the various motions that had been made should be converted into a decree, and the president Chapelier was proceeding accordingly, when he suddenly made a pause—"However," said he, "none of the clergy have yet had an opportunity of being heard; I should reproach myself if I closed this interesting discussion before those of the clergy, who are disposed to speak, have made their sentiments known."

We have now arrived, you will immediately see, at a part of the general subject more particularly interesting—the nature of the sacrifices made by the clergy, and the treatment they received.

It was impossible for the clergy not to come forward, whatever might, or might not, have been their original intentions, when thus called upon by the president; they seem to have managed ill, not to have settled beforehand the part they were to take. The crisis was probably too sudden and unexpected, but they do not appear to have wanted a proper interest in the welfare of the state when they *did* speak, or in the sufferings of others.

Lafare, the bishop of Nancy, in the name of his brethren, expressed his approbation of the abolition of feudal rights, &c. &c.; and proposed that the ransom of ecclesiastical feudalities should not go to the profit of the actual incumbent, but to the assistance of the poorer benefices, for the better relief of the indigent.

Luberac, the bishop of Chartres, expressed his regret at not having sooner seen that the time for political sacrifices was at last arrived. He proposed the suppression of the game laws, and the rights of the chase, describing them as they deserved.

These two speeches excited the greatest enthusiasm and applause in the Assembly, the sitting seemed suspended by them; the nobility were excited more than ever to a renewal and redoubling of their generous efforts for the happiness of the community; more of the nobles came forward with their sacrifices, and more of the clergy; then came the deputies of the different provinces with the renunciation of their privileges, charters, franchises, and capitulations (you remember how

the great monarchy of France was formed, by the continued accretion, piece by piece, if I may so speak, of one part after another, till it became what you see it); a crowd of other renunciations followed, and the Assembly was at last in such a situation of tumultuous excitement, that the bishop of Paris must be considered as having laid the Assembly under the greatest obligation by hitting off a finale, that might, with proper grace and effect, terminate so extraordinary a scene. He proposed a Te Deum, which was received with the loudest acclamations.

The Duke de Liancourt next proposed a medal, and Lally Tollendal succeeded in reminding the Assembly of the poor king, and in proposing that he should be proclaimed the restorer of French liberty.

Thus ended the celebrated sitting of the 4th of August: but not thus did it end to the clergy, who were affected by consequences a little more important to them than the procession to Notre Dame, a medal, and a new title given to the king.

A committee was appointed to reduce all these rival emotions of magnanimity and patriotism (for such they were) into a law, and the decree that followed, in the shape of nineteen articles, you will find in the notes of Bailly: the fifth is the important one to the clergy. The committee in this fifth article abolished tithes of every species, and they were only to be paid till the Assembly had made proper provision, and their present possessors had entered into the enjoyment of what the Assembly called the "remplacement" that was intended for them. And on the 13th of August the Assembly decreed, that by this word they did not mean (as it might naturally have been supposed) that they would furnish them with an equivalent, but with what should be a suitable and honourable support.

A sad difference of opinion seems immediately to have appeared. The committee considered tithes as a feudal vassalage or tax levied on the lands, and as such, with other feudal vassalages or taxes to be abolished; the clergy themselves considered ecclesiastical tithes as a rent-charge for the maintenance of the church, and they could not see how the legislature could transfer this rent-charge from the church, whose

property it was, to the landlords, who had no claim to it whatever. Several warm debates followed. Some idea may be formed of them from the Mercure* of the month of August, 1789. From the nature of this journal these debates are given in a broken, inconvenient, and imperfect manner, yet are they still sufficient, as they appear in different months, to enable you to mark the progress of revolutionary violence and injustice.

The great defender of the rights of the church was the great supporter of the Revolution itself, the Abbé Sieyes; like other celebrated statesmen that might be mentioned of our own, and of every other country, powerful when concurring with the public sentiment, weak when opposing it; proudly eminent when hallooing on the passions of the public, hooted down and disregarded when breathing the sounds of justice and of peace.

The arrêt containing the nineteen articles that I have just alluded to, was the result of the 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 11th of August. As the debate went on, the original rights of the clergy were treated with less and less ceremony; but while the argument was placed only on the issue which I have just mentioned, that the tithe was a rent-charge, the argument at least was entirely in their favour.

You will see at the close of the Mercure of August, an extract from the abbé's speech, which will perfectly enable you to judge of his reasonings. They seem to be entirely just, but the latter part, as here given, should come first. At the close of the extract, "The National Assembly," says he, "on the 4th of August decreed that the tithes were redeem-

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* The Mercure was a periodical work, the literary part by La Harpe and others, the political part by Mallet du Pan, published before and during the earlier parts of the French Revolution. Having made much use of it, and finding that it was now scarce, I have suggested to M. Mallet and his family, on account of what I esteemed its importance, my wish that it should be presented to the public library of the University of Cambridge; and, in compliance with my representations, this has been done.

able, and you now propose," says he, "that the tithe shall not be redeemable; and this is only a difference in the statement you say: pleasant enough this. If the ecclesiastical tithe is to be suppressed without any indemnity, will it not rest in the hands of those who owe it, instead of going to those to whom it is due? Is there an estate that has not been bought and sold since the establishment of tithes? Was purchase ever made without the charges being taken into calculation?"

You will easily see that while the abbé was proceeding in this strain, his reasonings were totally unanswerable; but he had before, as you will observe in the opening of this extract, taken a much more general view of the subject. He said not a word of the divine origin of tithes. This seems to have been a doctrine which he either did not hold, or did not think it prudent to produce; and the most philosophic layman, while the word philosophic is pronounced in its proper and natural sense, as a title of respect, will not, I conceive, find it necessary to proceed further than the abbé, who states as the sum and substance of what he meant to say,—first, that the tithe ought not to be compared to any impost or tax laid upon the land, but considered as a real rent-charge, left upon different estates by those who once possessed them; secondly, that the tithe ought not to be suppressed, for the sake of the actual proprietors of the land, who know very well that at all events it does not belong to them; nevertheless, thirdly, that the tithe has been with reason classed with that species of property which, however lawful (perfectly so in itself), is still answerable to the public good, and is liable to be extinguished, as all property of this kind is, after an indemnity offered to the present holders; fourthly, that the redemption ought to be settled by agreement freely between the parties concerned, or according to a fair estimate proposed by the Assembly; fifthly and lastly, that by due management, the sums so arising from the redemption might be so disposed of as properly to answer all the original purposes of the tithe, and yet furnish to the revenue of the state a resource infinitely precious to it in its present circumstances." These were the abbé's general statements and conclusions. I must again observe, that they were such as the most philosophic

laymen could not object to, and could not in common reason and justice go beyond. His reasonings and remonstrances with those the more violent of his opponents, do him in every point of view great honour; and he cried out at last, and his words have been ever since very properly remembered, "You wish to be free, and you know not how to be just." He appears to have published his speech on the 12th of August, and to have made it on the 10th.

There seems to have been a violent debate on the 10th, in the morning sitting, and in the evening.

You will see a sketch given in the Mercure. Mirabeau took a part. You may look at the second volume of his speeches. I will make a reference to it, that after seeing what in the main was said by the Abbé Sieyes on the one side, and by Mirabeau on the other (men so distinguished), you may judge of the general views that were entertained on the subject by the different reasoners in the Assembly and in France at the time. "No, gentlemen," said Mirabeau, "tithe is not a property; property is that which a man can dispose of: this the clergy never could do; they have never had more than a life interest in their tithes. Tithes are a sort of tenure, a sort of enjoyment from year to year; they are merely possessions revocable at the will of the sovereign power: nay, more, the tithe is not even a possession, as it has been supposed to be; it is a mere contribution, devoted to that part of the public service which concerns the ministers of the altar; it is the subsidy with which the nation provides for the salary of those who are to take care of their morals and instruction. At the word salary, which I have used, a great murmur has, I perceive, arisen; there are those, then, who are now saying that I wound the dignity of the priesthood. Gentlemen, it is high time that in a revolution which has brought to light sentiments, and those so many, just, and generous, it is high time that we should abjure these prejudices of haughty ignorance which would disdain these words of salaries and salaried. For my part, I know of but three ways of living in society—to beg, to rob, or to be salaried." These were words which Mirabeau thundered out into the Assembly with all the energy of his voice and manner. "What is the proprietor of land himself," he continued,

"more than the first of these salaried persons? What is vulgarly called his property? Is it any thing more than the price which society pays him for the distribution which he makes to others, in the shape of his consumption and his expenses?

"No doubt they who are charged with the morals and instruction of society must hold a distinguished place in its hierarchy. Consideration must be paid them, that they may show themselves worthy of it. It is just and proper that they should be accommodated and endowed in a manner agreeable to the dignity of their ministry and the importance of their functions; but it cannot be necessary that they should insist upon a particular mode of contribution from society, as if it was their property, when it is not agreeable to the interests of the public. I know not why it is disputed that the tithe is a national ordinance; it is so in point of fact, and it is on this very account that the nation has a right to revoke it, and substitute another. If it were not, that one is at length arrived at a period when one may disdain the frivolous authority of these mere men of learning, in matters of natural and public right, I would defy the best of them to find in all their capitularies of Charlemagne, where tithes are mentioned, the word "solverint;" the word is always "dederint," not pay, but give: but of what consequence is all this? The nation abolishes ecclesiastical tithes because they are a mode of paying that part of the public service, to which they are destined, and because it is easy to replace them in a manner less expensive and more equal."

Such was the general view of the subject taken by Mirabeau. I have already described to you the reasonings of the Abbé Sieyes. It may be instructive to you to see the notions of such distinguished men on so interesting a subject.

The notions of Mirabeau, vague as they may be, still remain; though trust property is a very common species of property, and obviously the nature of church property; this at least. But observe the light manner in which the same Mirabeau speaks of such an element in the constitution of all civil society, as property; think of such a man as Mirabeau, under the existing circumstances of an actual revolution, while the populace were lawless, and all ancient authority at an end,

talking of property "as the price which society pays a man for the distribution which he makes to others, in the shape of his consumption and expenses."

Observe, too, as you read the debates, for I have not time to comment upon them, the careless and unphilosophic terms in which the members of the Constituent Assembly, too many of them, spoke on this vital subject of property, property of whatever sort, at all times. It was this total disregard of what men hold most sacred in civilized society, which led to the extreme and pertinacious resistance of the privileged orders, the horrors of the Revolution, and the determined and ultimately successful resistance of all Europe to the new principles upon which the Revolution was founded.

The debate was in the same evening renewed. "I demand," said the bishop of Rhodes, "as indispensable, the preservation of the ecclesiastical benefices, and the conversion of the tithes into pecuniary payments. Your present resolution attacks, and would go to destroy religion itself. The tithe is destined to the support of the pastor; it has subsisted from the earliest ages of Christianity; it has been confirmed both by Pepin and Charlemagne. There must be divine worship; there must be priests; there must be funds for their support, when abstracted from the world, and for their comfort. Without this parishes would soon be without pastors, confessionals without confessors, the sick without assistance, the poor without relief, the afflicted without consolation."

"An enumeration of the payments and expenses of the clergy would show the extent of the charge to which the state will have hereafter to be exposed, if ecclesiastical property is to be destroyed." The bishop went on, but though, as you see, very reasonably, he could no longer obtain an audience.

No better fortune attended the Abbé Sieyes, who followed; the same clamours, the same interruptions. "What, then," said the abbé, "no truths are here to be spoken but those that are agreeable." In spite of all opposition, however, he delivered the speech to which I have just alluded, and which he published. He was followed by other speakers on each side the question; but the tribune became at last inaccessible, surrounded on all sides by candidates and clamours. Various efforts were made, and schemes proposed,

to come at the sense of the Assembly; all in vain: the disorder, the tumult, the interruptions, increased; the members left their seats, and got all mixed and confused together in the middle of the hall; at last the Assembly dispersed.

These are the scenes over which the friends of liberty must droop and hang their heads in mortification and grief, for they show the disgraceful violence of which men are capable, when they have been once excited in her cause, and collected into any popular assembly. They show likewise the inexpediency of leaving questions of state to be determined by one House of Assembly, exposed to such excitements; and the necessity of constituting a second, a subsequent one, by which a pause may be introduced, and reason, and justice, and humanity have some chance of protection.

The next morning (the 11th), when the subject was renewed, one of the secretaries but too naturally complained of the tumultuous sitting of the preceding evening. One of the members of the Commons made a furious attack on the clergy; the deputy from Toulon followed with an attack less violent, but more elaborate, concluding with an éloge on those of the clergy, who had already sacrificed their tithes, and a distinct enumeration of their names. This produced on a French assembly the effect intended, the curates rushing forward, as on the 4th, to give in their renunciation at the bureau. The Abbé de Plaquet resigned a priory; "and yet," said he, "notwithstanding the enumerating eloquence of M. de Mirabeau, I am, first, too old to get a salary; *secondly*, too honest to rob; thirdly, my past services have been such that I cannot think I ought to be left to beg." Applauses always ready, as ready as the hootings and clamours, resounded from all sides; and the Archbishop of Paris could not for some time obtain a hearing to deliver, as at the last he was allowed to do, his own and the general sentiment of the clergy.

"Our colleagues," he said, "have only anticipated the sacrifices which we have now universally to offer to our country. We return into the hands of the nation the ecclesiastical tithes, and we must trust ourselves entirely to its wisdom. Let the gospel be preached, let Divine worship lose nothing of its decency, let the poor be still relieved and

comforted; such are the objects of our wishes, the end and meaning of our ministry: from your enlightened wisdom we hope to find every necessary support and security for objects so important."

The fifth article then passed, as you see it, after some reasonable distinctions and objections had been offered, but which were not attended to, though they deserved attention, and with the dissent, firmly urged, of the Abbé Sieyes and one of the nobles.

It cannot be supposed that a concession like this from the bishops, so unlimited and so unconditional, was freely and voluntarily made by the clergy: the revolutionary tide had begun to run violently against them, and it was for them to endeavour, if possible, to evade it, and not to render it more rapid and furious by attempting openly to resist it.

In all times of disorder the officers of the law, and more particularly the clergy, are the first objects of popular hatred and persecution: it has been the necessary business of these two descriptions of men to restrain the passions of mankind; and mankind, in these unhappy seasons, do not choose to be restrained any longer; they therefore first dislike and soon detest those whose very presence admonishes them of the folly, the injustice, the guilt of the course they are pursuing.

Such is a general account of the fall of the French church establishment; but I will now enter a little more into the detail.

It must have already occurred to you that the property of the clergy offered an easy means of repairing the finances of the nation, and very early in the sittings of the National Assembly it must have presented itself in this point of view to those of its members who were the most violent and the most unprincipled. Even admitting the truth of some of the observations of Mirabeau, with regard to the possessions of the clergy, it is one thing to negotiate with a particular description of men, to enter into adjustments, and even obtain concessions from the necessity of the case, and it is quite another to use no right but that of the strongest, to violate their principles and feelings, disappoint their reasonable expectations, take away their property (what they had been allowed to consider as such), and draw out one set of men

from the midst of society, like sheep, to be sacrificed and butchered for the support of the remainder.

We will try to allude to the progress of the fortunes of the clergy from the first. Observe while we do so, how far these harsh words, which I have just used, are or are not applicable to the proceedings of the National Assembly, or rather the violent members of it; for it is to this point to which I must for ever remind you that my humble efforts all through these lectures are directed, not for a moment against the moderate and reasonable friends of liberty, but against the cruel, unjust, and fatal conduct of violent men; those whom the Marquis de Ferrieres calls the revolutionists; those who were in truth not the friends, but the enemies of liberty; those who have brought her great cause into suspicion and dislike, even with the virtuous and the good.

But to return to the fortunes of the clergy, and to gather up some particulars of the history, as yet not mentioned. Soon after the 4th of August, the Marquis la Coste, when Necker had called the attention of the Assembly to the subject of the finances, had insisted upon it, that the people could not furnish the succour that was wanted, but that there was *one* resource still remaining. "Declare," said he, "that the ecclesiastical possessions belong to the nation:" this was the first distinct and open assault. Alexander Lameth laboured to show, that to seize the possessions of the clergy was not to attack property in general. These attacks on the property of the clergy excited some murmurs. No measure at the time followed; "but this notion, thus thrown out," says De Ferrieres, "thus cast into the nation, germinated every where; it was adopted with enthusiasm by the monied men; and the people thought, that by thus extinguishing the public debt, they should get rid of the taxes.

The next attack on the possession of the clergy consisted of the debates, subsequent to the 4th of August, the debates on the 5th article respecting tithes; to these I have already alluded.

But on the 30th of October the motion of the Marquis de la Coste was revived by the Bishop of Autun, the celebrated Talleyrand. You will see his elaborate speech in the Mercure. This was a very serious attack, indeed, coming from

an ecclesiastic, high in rank, and of distinguished ability. His measure went to the destruction of the church property; but necessary provision, he said, must be made for the support of the altars and the ministers of religion. No minister of a parish was to have less than twelve hundred livres annually, house and glebe not included, &c. &c.

Loud applauses followed from the revolutionists and capitalists. The Abbés de Rastignac and D'Aymar, however, combated the project of the Bishop d'Autun, and showed how unjust it was and how dangerous to religion to leave its ministers at the mercy of the caprice of a nation, already little attached to its worship, and a government necessarily expensive and prodigal; no funds assigned, nothing upon which any dependence could be placed.

"You will plunge then into a state of indigence, two hundred thousand of your fellow citizens," said the Abbé Maury; "you talk of a *general* interest, and in the mean time, we are to see one part seizing the property of another part." Observations of this kind were of no effect. The business was indeed adjourned, till the Assembly could be removed from Versailles to Paris, "but, in the mean time," says De Ferrieres, "every effort was made to render the priesthood odious and contemptible. Men were hired," he says, "to represent to crowds in the streets, that the riches of the clergy must be seized, or a national bankruptcy ensue. The pride and hauteur of the bishops was not forgotten; the incontinence and drunkenness of the monks; the soft voluptuous lives of the abbés. Pamphlets on pamphlets succeeded to each other; some affected to be profound, and demonstrate the right of the nation to the possessions of the clergy.

"At the theatre was acted the tragedy of Charles IX., who reigned, you may remember, during the massacre of St. Bartholomew; acted with the most unhappy effect, from the nature of its misrepresentations on the minds of the audience."

Such are the very credible accounts of De Ferrieres.

The project of the Bishop d'Autun was, after these preparations, revived by Thouret; now attached to the revolutionists. "No public body," he said, "the nation excepted, can have in itself either property or existence, for it owes both to the nation, who protects it and allows it to have either; the

nation may therefore resume its grant." Applauses followed a long and able and laboured speech, which he regularly delivered. Opinions, however, were still somewhat undecided, and Mirabeau, who knew the importance of phrases, "Say rather," he cried, "in your decree, not that the possessions of the clergy belong to the state, but that they are 'at the disposal of the state.'"

An ordinary mind, in its simple honesty, will see here, perhaps, no very material distinction, but the amendment was applauded, as if of importance, and was violently resisted by the nobles and the clergy; and a base and shuffling crowd of the members affected not to see the consequences of the principle they thus established, and uniting themselves to the revolutionists, the decree thus worded passed on the 2nd of November, 1789, by a large majority. For some time, however, it was only a decree, not acted upon; the first attempt to make a practical use of it was a succeeding decree, which ordered the sale of four hundred millions of the property to the different municipalities. The clergy hoped, however, that the remnant would be left them undisturbed; they offered to raise by a loan, and present to the state, the four hundred millions wanted.

But all their hopes were dispelled by a motion made on the 3rd of April, 1790, by Chapel, who, on that day, proposed that the possessions of the clergy should, in each district, be transferred to the administration of the department, and proper provision being made for the clergy and the public worship, the whole be then disengaged and made available to the exigencies of the state. The Bishop of Nanci, the Archbishop of Aix, in vain protested against the motion, complained of the perfidious manner in which the clergy had been treated, and renewed the offer of four hundred millions to be freely given to the service of the state. The Abbé de Montesquieu, so endeared by his amiable qualities, both to one party and the other, found that it was in vain he endeavoured to engage the Assembly in favour of the clergy.

At last he said, "When I mounted this tribune, I was addressed on all sides: 'What are you doing?' they cried; 'the business is already settled; the committees have already decided.' It is too true: I have only then to descend from

this tribune; I have only to implore the God of our fathers that he will preserve to you the religion of St. Louis; that he will still grant you his protection: the truly unhappy, those most to be pitied, are not they who suffer injustice, but they who commit it." This brought up a member of the monastic order, who said, it was easy for the Assembly to put an end to calumnies vented against them on the subject of religion, by declaring, as he now proposed that they should do, that the religion Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman, was, and was for ever, to remain the religion of the state, and its worship the only one to be authorized.

You will easily see how inconvenient and unexpected a motion like this must necessarily have been to the Assembly at this particular moment: the advantage which the one party would endeavour to make of it, the embarrassment and distress of the other. Having mentioned it, I need do no more; your curiosity will be sufficiently excited.

You will see a good account of the scene that took place; among other writers, more particularly by the Marquis de Ferrieres.

The motion, as you may suppose, was got rid of, as irrelevant and unnecessary; but the fate of the clergy and their possessions was soon after in subsequent sittings decided.

The number of bishops and archbishops was reduced to one for each department; their stipends, in future, to twenty-five, fifteen, or ten thousand livres, that is about from one thousand to four hundred pounds per annum, or under, according to the population; parish priests, about one hundred pounds per annum; and the curates, about forty pounds each, with a parsonage in addition.

This was but indifferent provision for the future clergy; but the present bishops were to have the whole of what they received, if not exceeding five or six hundred pounds per annum; one half of what it did exceed, if the *whole* did not exceed about fifteen hundred pounds per annum: they had before five, some of them ten thousand pounds per annum, fifteen, and even in some cases between thirty and forty thousand pounds per annum.

The abbés, priors, dignitaries, &c. &c. and other beneficed clergymen, if their ecclesiastical revenue did not exceed fifty

pounds, had the whole; if it did, half the excess, as before; but the whole revenue was never to exceed about three hundred pounds.

The incomes, therefore, of the existing priests and dignitaries were miserably curtailed. The triumph of the Jansenists and revolutionary reasoners was very evident: these two were descriptions of men, who, in their notion of the priestly character, its offices, and its proper rewards, not a little agreed.

In a word, the total expense of divine worship, including the stipends of its ministers, to the number of forty-eight thousand, the provisions of the friars and nuns, the necessary succours for the hospitals, colleges, &c. &c. and the expenses of erecting and repairing buildings, was fixed at about seven millions.

The plan of the ecclesiastical committee was, to add the raising of this sum to the general mass of taxes and contributions to be raised from the nation; suppressing tithes, and placing the whole amount of ecclesiastical property in the hands of the nation. This was in April, 1790.

At a prior meeting of the Assembly, in February, 1790, the monastic establishments had been suppressed for ever, and their lands confiscated. The existing friars and nuns were, however, allowed to continue in the observance of their monastics vows; moderate stipends were granted for their maintenance; and the nuns were not to be removed from the convents in which they then resided without their own consent.

It should seem, in this last instance, as if the ancient gallantry of the French nation had still survived to produce something like a parting emotion of humanity and politeness, when the fate of these inoffensive females was ultimately to be decided.

But on the whole, these proceedings must be considered as marked with the most unequivocal tyranny and injustice, though little or nothing of this kind is said by the popular French writers, who are often to be censured, not only as too indifferent to the humanity of the case, but as inattentive to the great leading principles on which constitutional governments are founded, and from which they derive so inestimable a value. The clergy were told, indeed, that they were to be paid in money; but no real property was left as a security

for their stipends, the whole was swept away: assignats were to be issued; the church property was to be pledged or sold for the regular payment of these assignats. If a system of paper money was to be resorted to, as a measure of the state, there was little chance that the state would pay the clergy in money. The paper money of America had been just before a subject of historic experience; depreciated, so as at last not to be worth the counting. On the whole, the indignant exclamation of one of the curés, in some of the earlier stages of these ecclesiastical discussions, is recalled to our remembrance. "Was it for this then," said the unhappy man, when he saw, as he thought, how the proceedings of the Assembly were likely to terminate, "was it for this that you invited us to join you in the name of the God of peace?"

But the last and finishing act of tyranny and injustice yet remained: this was the interference of the National Assembly, not only in the temporal but in the spiritual concerns of the church. Various decrees were proposed for what was called the organization of the church; every benefice, for instance, from a curacy to a bishoprick, was to be rendered elective; people of all religions were to vote; the long established limits and extent of dioceses were to be altered. The discussions to which a scheme of church government like this gave occasion, occupy a certain portion of the histories which you will have to read. You will easily, in the mean time, comprehend, that this new civil constitution of the church was totally inconsistent with all the notions and feelings, whether right or wrong, which had been so long transmitted from age to age, and considered as sacred by the members of the Roman Catholic church, a church that refers every thing in their spiritual economy to the first Apostles and to the Saviour himself. It was in vain that they expostulated, argued, and remonstrated; that they proposed the calling of a National Council to consider what concessions could be made. No such measure as a general council was likely to be very agreeable to the Assembly; and they, on the contrary, imposed an oath of submission and acceptance of the new civil constitution, as already decreed, to be taken by the clergy, under the penalty of expulsion from their benefices in cases of non-compliance.

This is surely a sad specimen of revolutions; this is surely

to legislate and to act with the rude and savage spirit of those who, in the carelessness of power, exercise only the right of the strongest; this is surely to disregard and outrage the most sacred feelings of the human heart, and the most ennobling principles of human conduct.

There is, indeed, no limit to be put to our indignation on the present occasion.

The French clergy had, at the moment of the Revolution, essentially contributed to the success even of the popular party; their reunion with the Tiers Etat was to be written, according to Bailly the president, in letters of gold. They had shown no want of interest in the public welfare at any period of the Revolution; could then no better terms than these be made with them, no better means than these be found for reconciling them to the new order of things? Suppose them enemies to it, and fallen and helpless, could no better mercy be shown them, than first stripping them of their property, and then violating their consciences?

All these proceedings were then defended in the Assembly, and since in the patriotic histories, as measures of self preservation, as necessary to the cause of liberty, as arising from the refractoriness of the clergy, from their efforts to put down the Revolution, particularly in the interior; but this is to confound dates and misrepresent the history. I do not deny that there was, originally, great difficulty in the case. The clergy could not be expected to be very favourable to the Revolution originally; but how could they be favourable to the progress of the Revolution afterwards, if it was to sweep away, in its torrent, their property and their establishments; and where was the necessity that this should be the case; where was the necessity, after they had joined the Tiers Etat, that their possessions should be menaced, their rights disputed and denied; that when they argued and remonstrated, no concessions should be admitted; that the Revolution should be made fatal, to them at least; and because they were then no longer any friends to it, that their destruction should be resolved upon?

It could not have been the wise and the good men of the National Assembly (the earlier majorities were not great, about twelve to seven), it must have been the furious, violent revolutionists, whom I can never sufficiently denounce to

you, who originated, conducted (the moderate men committed their usual fault of being too torpid), and at length step by step succeeded in their scheme of carrying into execution these arbitrary, and unjust, and cruel measures; impolitic too as they were cruel: and the only consolation that can now be derived from the subject is, that the clergy of France, though ruined, were not disgraced; that they refused to take the oath required from them, and were not wanting, either to themselves or to mankind, on this trying occasion. Certainly they were acting on the theatre of the world, and in the presence of all posterity, and still more in the presence of their Almighty Master; and they showed, as men of real piety always will show, a sense of duty, and the faith that was within them. They were to be cast, indeed, like the traveller in holy writ, to the compassion of the Samaritan (and for much the same reason, for they had fallen among robbers); they were thus to be thrown into the highway, in any stage, whatever it might be, of age and infirmity, but they were still to show, and they did show to the bad men of a world of violence, the plunderers that had encompassed them, that powerful as they might think themselves, still there were those, the innocent and the helpless, who would resist them—resist them, and, in all the power of unoffending piety, resist them to the death; that there were those whom they might despoil of their possessions, but who had that within which their decrees could not reach; who, wretched as they might be thought, and who, outcasts as they might be, seen flying from their country, or lingering in its hiding places, without a benefice and without an altar, had still a character to enjoy and a God to serve.

What then are the facts? You must observe them. You will see them all from the first, very fully in the Marquis de Ferrieres, and very easily in Bertrand de Moleville. In the sitting of the 2nd of January, 1791, the Bishop of Clermont proposed an oath which he would have taken, and which it was the height of the most intolerable injustice in the Assembly to refuse. "He would be true," he said, "to the nation, to the law, and to the king, and would maintain with all his power, in all that related to political order, the constitution decreed by the National Assembly, and accepted by the king,

with the express exception of those matters which depend particularly upon the authority of the church." "This oath I can take," he said; "the oath you propose I do not think I conscientiously can take."

But this sort of declaration would not satisfy the Assembly.

Barnave moved, that the time for taking the oath should expire at one o'clock the next day. The Abbé Grégoire attempted explanations of the oath, but the Assembly refused to avow them formally, by any decree, and the president at last informed the ecclesiastical members, that they must answer to the call of names which was going to be made, and take the oath or refuse it. A dead silence followed, interrupted by the howlings of the mob who surrounded the hall; by the cries of "To the Lanterne! Away with the nonjurors to the Lanterne!"

The Bishop of Agen was named the first; and he desired to speak. "No speaking," cried out several members of the *coté gauche*; "will you take the oath or not?"

The bishop at length obtained a hearing; he had never spoken before in the Assembly. "I feel no regret," said he, "for the loss of my preferment" (the courteous, the polite humility of the Christian character did not desert him), "I feel no regret for my fortune, but I shall regret the loss of your esteem, which I am determined to deserve at least; believe me then, that I feel great pain at not being able to take the oath you require."

M. Fournés was next called.

"I glory," said he, "in following my bishop, as St. Lawrence did his pastor."

M. Le Clerc was the third called upon: he had scarcely pronounced the words, "I am a member of the Apostolical Catholic Church," when he was interrupted by the most violent murmurs. "Take the oath," said Roederer," or refuse to take it."

"This," said M. de Feriault, "is tyranny indeed; the very emperors suffered the martyrs to pronounce the name of God, to utter the testimonies of their fidelity to religion."

At last the president persisted no longer in the call of names, but required the public ecclesiastical functionaries

collectively to ascend the tribune. A motion had been made to that effect, and carried. The good part of the Assembly had feared, that those who refused the oath would be marked out and massacred; and the bad had perceived that the triumph of religious principle was becoming too distinct and solemn.

A curate of the name of Landrin was the only one who took the oath. Two offered to take it with the restrictions proposed by the Bishop of Clermont, but were refused. No concession could afterwards be obtained from the Assembly; they would not say distinctly, by a decree, that they meant not the control of spiritual affairs. "To the order of the day" was the only answer.

The Bishop of Poitiers ascended the tribune. "I am seventy years old," said he; "I have passed thirty-five in the episcopacy; I have done my best to discharge my duty; I will not dishonour my old age; I cannot take an oath against my conscience." "Say yes or no." "I prefer then living in poverty, and will take my fate in the spirit of penitence."

After some more vain efforts by the clergy to obtain concessions and explanations from the Assembly, the president for the last time called upon the public ecclesiastical functionaries to take the oath conformably to the decree.

The Assembly waited in vain: no one presented himself; no bishop, no priest spoke; and all heard in silence, serene and unmoved, the decree that pronounced their deprivation. Such was the conduct of the French clergy; such the cruel and unjust proceedings of the National Assembly. But these proceedings were impolitic as well as cruel and unjust, for they inevitably threw the clergy into the most decided opposition to the Revolution, and all whom they could influence.

I will cast a parting glance on this part of the subject, and conclude.

"I do not think," said afterwards M. de Montlosier, "that the bishops *can be forced* to quit their sees. Driven from their episcopal palaces, they will retire to the huts of the cottagers who have fed upon their bounty; take from them their golden crosses, they will find those of wood. The cross was of wood,—the cross that saved the world."

M. de Cazales insisted on the necessity of suspending the execution of the decree. "A schism," said he, "is preparing;

the whole body of the bishops of France and the great majority of the inferior clergy believe that the principles of religion forbid them to obey your decrees; their principles are of a nature superior to your laws. Expelling bishops from their sees, and priests from their parishes, in order to overcome this resistance, is not the way to overcome it. You will be but at the commencement of the course of persecution that opens before you. The victims of the Revolution will be multiplied, and the kingdom be divided." Nor was M. de Cazales materially mistaken in his prediction.

In the metropolis, no doubt, the populace took little interest in the fate of the church, but all the unhappy effects of religious schism were every where else but too visible, as M. de Cazales had predicted. The bishops refused to give up their sees; protested against the spiritual authority of those, who were to replace them; forbade all good Catholics from communicating with them in any of the sacred offices of the church; declared the marriages illegal, &c.

The effect was very unfavourable to the National Assembly all over France, though not exactly in Paris; for the revolutionists, in the mean time, filled the streets and shops of Paris with indecent caricatures and dramatic exhibitions, ridiculing and reflecting on the clergy. In a contest like this it was very clear, who were likely to bear away the triumph in the midst of the Revolution and in the streets of Paris; and while the thoughtful and the grave, the few that there were, turned away with pain or disgust from prints and spectacles of the nature we have described, the rest of the population, laughing and amused, were content to be entertained at any expense, and the interests of religion were no longer regarded, if found not to harmonize with the interests, such as they were supposed, of the Revolution.

The violent party in the Assembly had always depended on the inferior clergy, who were to be tempted with the benefices and sees of their superiors, and were from the first less attached to the ancient system. And it is very true, that though a great majority was firm, a sufficient minority, on one account or another, took the oath; so that there was no danger of the entire cessation of public worship.

The rites of religion necessary to society could still be per-

formed. And the people every where, in the great towns more particularly, supposed, that the only chance which France had of escaping from tithes, and even feudal oppressions, as well as from taxes and public burdens, was the spoliation of the clergy, and the submission of the clergy to the new constitution proposed to them.

Still all the interior of France was long harassed by civil and religious dissensions, and by local wars; always very disgraceful to the country, often very bloody, and sometimes not a little dangerous to the success even of the more violent and popular party. These, and above all, the dreadful war of La Vendée, sufficiently proved the original impolicy as well as injustice of the National Assembly, and the wisdom of the very humane observations I have just quoted from M. de Cazales and M. de Montlosier; and all that the former predicted in the remainder of his speech to a similar effect would have been fully verified, if the subsequent fury and violence of the Revolution had not swept away from the minds of the people of France all the ordinary feelings and associations of their nature. Such is the general sketch that I have to offer to your consideration of this very remarkable portion of the French Revolution: the destruction of the feudal system and church establishment of France.

You will easily conceive that the different writers of histories and memoirs will see these transactions from very different points of view.

I can have afforded you, in a short lecture like this, but a very imperfect notion of their reasonings, and of the subject itself, but you will read for yourselves, and you will see a very able and spirited *précis* of the whole subject in M^e^. de Stael.

You will find a general account of it in both of our Annual Registers; a general though more detailed account in Lacretelle; one also from which I have quoted, in Bertrand de Moleville. The most full and complete account is in the Memoirs of the Marquis de Ferrieres, which you may compare with the very full account on the other side, furnished by the history of the Two Friends of Liberty. In this last work you will meet with every thing that can be urged on the revolutionary side of the question, all the philosophy that can be produced, and all the ecclesiastical learning; the same philosophy you will

also find, united to all the eloquence of which that side of the question was susceptible in the different speeches of Mirabeau (there are several of them), appearing in the different volumes of the octavo collection of them. And if you look through the different volumes of the Mercure, you will acquire a very adequate idea of the debates that took place, and the different speeches and various reasonings by which the interests of the clergy were assailed and defended. And, indeed, every thing relative to the subject in the course of these volumes is more or less found, particularly the unanswerable pleadings of the Abbé Sieyes. Lastly, in our own writers, you will see all the powers of Burke engaged on the one side, and the rising eloquence of Mackintosh on the other. These are very splendid portions of their great performances. You will find in the public library a short treatise by Sarpi, his "Treatise on Beneficiary Matters." And you will very easily refer to a learned and very able history and defence of church property in the Quarterly Review for July, 1823, and again the subject continued in the number for January, 1830.

A few words more, for the sake of making a few necessary distinctions on the general subject of the destruction of the church establishment of France, and I conclude my lecture.

Society cannot exist (any state, at least, that deserves the name of society) without the institution of property, but it may, without the institution of church property. The foundation, therefore, of the two is not the same,—this must be admitted; the property of the individual is necessary to the very constitution of society, not so, the property of the clergyman.

It may be very possible, that an establishment may be the best method of providing society with the consolations of religion, the best method of explaining its doctrines and exhibiting its evidences, of securing mankind from degrading or dangerous fanaticism on the one side, or even on the other, from licentious indifference: it is very possible, that the best method of securing these most important ends, may be the establishment of an ecclesiastical body, and the furnishing of that body with a permanent, independent, visible, real support, like that of land or its produce. All this may be very true;

and as this possession is from age to age continued, it may not, in the common estimation of mankind, or in a court of law, be distinguished from any other possession or property; and an estate of land or tithes may thus be enjoyed by an ecclesiastical body, or by a minister of religion, as an estate is by any other individual: still it must be allowed, that the original nature of the possession is different; that society cannot exist without the one sort of property, but may without the other; that the one is a case of necessity, the other of legislative wisdom.

But when this sort of reasoning has been admitted, with Mirabeau, still it must be laid down, with the Abbé de Sieyes, that men must be just; and when a state has long proceeded, from age to age, on a certain system; has long suffered men to educate themselves for a specific purpose; has at all times, and in all places, dedicated, or allowed individuals to dedicate, which is the same thing, real possessions to that specific purpose, and suffered their possessions to assume the office and character of property; it surely can have no right to turn round on a sudden, to tell such a body of men, that it has altered its system, that they are no longer wanted, and that they were mistaken in supposing their land or their tithes property; that the original elementary difference of property was now to be acted upon; that they must give up the whole, or any part of it, which the legislature now found it convenient to resume, or to annul the right of. Language of this kind, the language of the revolutionists, is surely not, for a moment, to be considered as consistent with humanity or justice. A wide distinction even exists between what a state may do as regards the future, and as regards the present; a future heirarchy it may treat according to its new system and views, or it may in future dispense with an hierarchy altogether: this may be a matter of legislative wisdom, and no more; but it is not to proceed in this speculative manner with those in whom it has already raised rational expectations, and whose thoughts, opinions, feelings, and habits, whose ideas of comfort, respectability, and happiness, it has suffered to grow up and be fashioned to a particular model of its own approving or proposing. Indemnity, compensation, voluntary adjustment, these are the only sounds that can now be heard.

In these observations I have not insisted on the nature of *trust* property, that it is inviolable if the duty be performed; I have consented to take the ground which the enemies of church property propose. They may, however, be reminded, that what is now church property was never in possession of the state; that it was originally given by those who possessed it to ecclesiastical bodies and functionaries, who were thus to be supported while they dispensed the offices of religion; and that while, therefore, they do faithfully dispense the offices of religion, their part of the obligation is performed, and the property must remain with them according to the intention of the original possessor and giver of it; the property is trust property.

There never was, as is supposed, any gift of property made by the state; the state is only indirectly the giver, as allowing such gifts to be legal. As far as the state has interfered, it has not been to give property, but rather to prevent the gift of it, that is, to prevent persons of religious feelings, by statutes of mortmain and other legal expedients, from giving away their property to pious uses, in a manner that became at last injurious to the community.

But, as I have already intimated, France, it will be said, and it has been said by two most distinguished writers, France had to perfect its Revolution, and the existence of the great Roman Catholic hierarchy of France, was inconsistent with its hopes of freedom; the whole body was therefore to be dissolved.

I do not think it necessary now, at the termination of my lecture, and after all that I have already said, to enter into this sort of reasoning. I hope that I love liberty, and that I teach the love of it to others, and that it will be sufficient for me to answer, that liberty itself, even if it could, must not be thus procured.

# LECTURE XVI.

## MOUNIER. LA FAYETTE. NO PROPER EXECUTIVE POWER.

THE fall of the church establishment in France was not the result of a single sitting of the Assembly, as in the case of the feudal privileges of the aristocracy and the nobility; the transactions, to which we have just alluded, were, one after another, the consequences, and the subject matter of many debates and discussions, from the middle of the year 1789, to the 12th of June, 1790. It took a year to overthrow the hierarchy of this great kingdom, but this was an interval fearfully short for such an event; and the destruction of a body of men so numerous, so connected, so elevated by their education, in their office so sacred, even so useful, to say the least of them, in their occupation, as the civilizers of the main portions of mankind, a body of men for ages had in honour, and considered as an indispensable element in society,—the destruction of their privileges, their property, and their influence, so soon to be accomplished and so completely,—was, indeed, a most striking specimen of the hardness of the nature of the members of the Constituent Assembly, and well fitted to show how reckless men may be made by the sympathy and fury of new opinions, and how unpitying, indeed, is the nature of enthusiasm, on whatever occasion, and of whatever kind.

A milder fate might have awaited the clergy, but the current of these new opinions had begun to run more and more strongly in favour of innovation and democracy from the moment that the Assembly and the people had triumphed, and the court had tried their experiment of menaces and force in vain. It would often be happy for mankind, if the victorious party could abstain from abusing their victory; but this is not to be expected from human nature, and governments must not proceed upon any supposition of this kind: they

must abide their mistakes, and the consequences of their faults, which will certainly be followed by faults in their opponents.

Melancholy were the events that intervened during the struggles of the clergy with the National Assembly, all most unfavourable to the clergy; for them there was no hope, nor ever had been, but in the due maintenance of the respectability and efficiency of the royal power.

But this respectability and efficiency had constantly declined from the month of July, 1789; it had been deeply injured by the sweeping and totally unqualified sacrifices of the night of the 4th of August; every movement and every event continued to operate to its prejudice; that is, as it may now be perceived, when it is too late, continued to operate to the failure of the experiment of this French Revolution. These movements and events should be carefully marked by the student, for they are now the lessons of history.

To us, who live at some distance of time and place, it is somewhat surprising to observe, that the very enlightened, and most of them virtuous men, who composed the patriotic part of the National Assembly, for some time after the month of July, were not more aware than they seem to have been, how completely the executive power was now destroyed. It is scarcely too much to say, that the king was, indeed, seated on the throne, but that a baby sceptre was in his hand, and that he was a phantom only and a name.

The troops of the line, all the former supports of his power, had acceded to the new order of things, and the nation itself had suddenly taken up arms; and the regular soldiers of France, if favourable to the king, were surrounded, and had, in truth, become mere prisoners of war. What single wish of the king could now be accomplished, if leave were not first asked of the National Assembly? In theory, indeed, and as a component part of a good constitution, and of any that could be well intended for France, these patriotic leaders saw the necessity of a king, and of executive power; but they seem by no means to have been sufficiently aware, that they had now nothing to fear, whatever they might once have had to fear, but from the violence of democratic principles. No doubt they would have had great difficulties to contend with,

in the midst of a people so giddy, licentious, and ignorant, however just had been their estimate of their situation; but they had formed no such estimate, and they seem by no means to have taken sufficiently into their account the extraordinary advantages which they possessed, not only in the complete triumph of the Assembly, but in the known disposition of the monarch, so marked by gentleness and amiable qualities.

Whatever might be their difficulties, arising whether from the people or the court, the monarch, at least, as they knew very well, had no wish but the happiness of his people; no terror but that of shedding their blood; no fear but that of a civil war. This they knew, and they knew that his mind was open to schemes of improvement, to any change and experiment, not obviously inconsistent with his long established opinions and the proper dignity of his crown.

This was their great advantage. In the patriotic feelings of the court and the princes, they could look for no assistance; every thing the reverse: but they *could* in those of the king; and it was their business to make their terms as mild and equitable to him as possible; to furnish him with as good a case as they could against those who surrounded him, while he was endeavouring to be patriotic, while he was listening to the suggestions of Necker, or other friendly counsellors, or acceding to the measures of the Assembly. Here lies, I conceive, their great accusation. The mildness of his disposition, his real benevolence, his genuine patriotism, had no proper effect upon them; it did not, for a moment, check their usurpations on the royal power; it did not, for a moment, dispose them to the wisdom of offering honourable terms to a fallen foe, if a foe he was to be esteemed; it did not animate them, as it ought to have done, to encircle him with their protection, and shield him from the violent and disorderly spirits which they saw in the Palais Royal, and in their own Assembly; there was no generous sympathy with gentleness and goodness (I speak not of Mounier and his friends, Lally Tollendal and others, I speak of the main body of the patriots). These French patriots were not situated as were our English patriots in the time of what is denominated the great rebellion. Louis XVI. was not Charles I. Our patriots had, indeed, difficulties; for there was in their king no proper mildness, no

general benevolence, no sympathy with civil liberty on which they could depend. It was otherwise with the French monarch; and not only this, but the violent counsellors of his more immediate court had tried their experiment, and had been defeated and overpowered. They were, no doubt, to be watched and distrusted, but they were no longer to be feared. The king had shown, that he could be no instrument in their hands; that there were certain limits, distinct measures of tyranny, a civil war, bloodshed, beyond which they could not hurry him; that wanting character as he did, still, as far as benevolence to his people was concerned, he did not want character; and that if they did not give the court an opportunity of saying, that as a king of France he was insulted and extinguished, all might yet be well. The main body of the men of talents and patriotism in the National Assembly, the main body of the assertors of the new opinions are not to be forgiven for their want of forbearance, caution, and conciliatory wisdom. I must appeal to the great leading facts.

You will observe, then, that from the period of their victory in July, every measure and every change was continually more and more unfavourable to the royal power.

In the first place, the proceedings of the night of the 4th of August could not have been altogether relished by the king, for whatever might be, in general, their beneficial and reasonable import, they were in a style of revolutionary rapidity and violence, that could not but be alarming to any one like himself, a regular and constituted authority of the state.

He made, therefore, very natural observations when these proceedings were reported to him, and, while he approved their general spirit and meaning, talked of modifications and indemnities, and, with the love he bore his people, spoke of the protection he owed also to the principles of justice. On the general subject, however, as he said, there could be no difference between him and the Assembly; their wishes being the same.

The Assembly were not pleased with his measured acquiescence, with his reasonable criticisms, important remarks, nor did many of the members at all conceal their displeasure.

But now, in the second place, it must be observed, that the great subject of the future constitution of France was also brought forward, and that every change and every measure

was continually unfavourable to the royal power, visibly, offensively so, in the eyes of himself, his friends, and all Europe. Was it thus that he was to be reconciled to the Revolution?

This part of our general subject is so important, that I must present it to you under every possible point of view that I can contrive. My mode of doing this will be by exhibiting to you the different notices that were taken of these transactions by intelligent writers and reasoners at the time. I wish you to proceed as little as possible upon any authority of mine; and do not be offended by my tediousness of detail or dulness of quotation, or repetitions of the same facts or reasonings.

This cause of the French Revolution was one of the greatest that has existed in the annals of mankind since the times of the Reformation. It failed—in every proper sense of the word, it failed; and the point of the subject now more immediately before us is, how far the friends of freedom themselves were *in fault; how far they, too, did* or *did not* take their turn, and commit their particular faults; faults to be marked and condemned, after those that had been committed by the court and privileged orders have been first stated and duly reprobated. I certainly conceive that this was the case. How far these faults and mistakes were or were not but too natural, is not the point; if they really were committed, they must be produced, and made to serve as a warning to wise and virtuous men hereafter.

*With* respect, then, to the great subject of the formation of the constitution, you will observe that among the patriotic members of the Assembly there was one particular band, headed by Mounier, consisting of Lally Tollendal, Clermont, Tonnerre, and others, who were men (as I conceive) of real wisdom as well as of patriotic feeling, to whom the business of the constitution was first referred, and who were the committee of five, and who really *did* make on the whole a very reasonable report to the Assembly, who did not press too hard on the royal executive power in the existing state of things, and who in fact proposed a scheme of a constitution somewhat after the model of that of England. This is the first point.

But that this scheme was overruled by the Assembly, and one of a much more democratic nature, after much discussion,

ultimately adopted: this was, I apprehend, fatal to the Revolution. This is the second point.

This second scheme of a constitution was made much more democratic. For, in the formation of any constitution that could be proposed for France at this particular period, the great questions at issue were—

1st. The veto of the king on the proceedings of the Assembly.

2ndly. Whether the Assembly should consist of two houses or one.

3rdly. Whether be dissolved at the pleasure of the king.

All these three questions were determined in *favour* of the crown by Mounier and his friends in their first scheme of government; and determined right, as I conceive: but other patriotic members of the Assembly thought otherwise, as did the majority of the Assembly; and in their scheme of government these points were determined *against* the crown; and in this manner the cause of the Revolution was, I also conceive, lost—lost in the interval that passed between the middle of July and the beginning of October.

And now I have two observations to make. Those other patriotic members, La Fayette and others, who thus made another constitution, more democratic in its nature; a constitution in which these questions were determined against the crown, were not a little led away by the example of America, as well as by the intoxicating nature of the new opinions. This is my first observation.

Lastly, by a reference to the debates that took place, you will see that these patriots and the people of France had sufficient warning, from the reasonings and speeches of intelligent men, of the mistakes they were committing. This is my second observation.

Such is my general statement, which I must request you to remember while I journey on through the varying opinions and statements of different actors in the scene, and while I go a little more into the detail than I have yet done, on account of what I suppose to be the importance of this part of the general subject.

One of the most distinguished men among the leaders of the popular party at this particular epoch was the celebrated

La Fayette. He had been the hero of the American Revolution; and however then favourable (as indeed, in practice at least, he always remained) to the monarchy of France, it was still impossible that he should not bear away from that revolution a strong impression of those great democratic principles of liberty, which he had seen in America successfully established, and to whose triumph he had so materially, in the face of the world and of posterity, contributed.

His fellow patriots must have been caught by the same flame, and influenced by the same example. Even Mounier, Lally Tollendal, and the most virtuous and the wisest members of the Assembly, could not have been otherwise than affected by the influence of this memorable assertion of what they considered as the great, the original rights of mankind; and, therefore, even in moments of depression, and while they thought the court and the royal authority were likely to overwhelm them, and before the Bastile was destroyed, they had busied themselves in preparing a declaration of their rights, to leave, if it were necessary, as a legacy to their countrymen.

It happened that the issue of the struggle, as you have seen, turned out entirely in their favour; and, therefore, they now renewed their intention of exhibiting these great principles of civil liberty, as had been done in America, and of laying the foundations of the future constitution of France so deeply, as they conceived, that the edifice could never hereafter be shaken by any efforts of tyranny or usurpation. It is at this moment that begin our first thoughts of doubt, and even of censure, in this business of the formation of the constitution; for this their resolution, though wise and magnanimous in the first instance, and before the 14th of July, might not be exactly expedient in the second. The conduct to be pursued in a situation of danger or defeat was one thing, and in a situation of victory and triumph might be quite another.

Considerations, however, of this kind, seem never to have occurred to La Fayette or his friends, and the consequences were very lamentable.

We will refer a little to the great example that on this occasion betrayed them—to America.

In America, not long after the declaration of independence

by the Congress, the different provinces of that great continent began to form constitutions for themselves, and these were generally prefaced or accompanied by assertions of the original rights of mankind and the popular origin of all free government.

"All men are born free and equal," says the first article of the declaration of Massachusetts, "and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights;" and it proceeds to enumerate them.

Again, in the constitution of Pennsylvania: "All men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent and indefeasible rights." "All power is inherent in the people; all free governments are founded on their authority," says the ninth article. "All government of right originates from the people," says the first article of the declaration of the state of Delaware. So the declarations of Maryland, and of North Carolina; so the ninth article in that of South Carolina; and so the rest. "All men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent, and unalienable rights," says the declaration of the inhabitants of Vermont. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," said the Declaration of Independence issued by Congress in 1776, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among them, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." "That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it." "That governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; but when a long train of abuses and usurpations evinces a design to reduce men under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security."

Here we see the school in which the French patriots had studied. La Fayette talked afterwards, you may remember (but in cases of necessity arising from oppression), "of the sacred duty of insurrection;" nor can it be denied that these manly principles are founded in nature and in truth, that they

are deeply engraven on the hearts of all men, and that they form the proper protection of the social order among men. These are the theories upon which legislators and governors are to proceed while they are endeavouring to administer to the happiness of their fellow creatures; and these are no doubt the great principles and sentiments of human nature to which an appeal must ultimately be made by the people and their patriots, when governments abuse and persevere in abusing their trust.

The only question is the manner in which these principles and sentiments are to be applied to the concerns of mankind; the time, the occasion, the form, under which they are to be exhibited to the consideration of the people. The limitation made even by the American Congress, while throwing off the yoke, as they thought it, of Great Britain, is very remarkable. "Prudence will dictate," they say, "that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;" and they reduce the case to a design of absolute despotism—to a case "of a long train of abuses and usurpations," such are their words, and "that evince a design to reduce men under absolute despotism."

It therefore well became the wise and virtuous men of the National Assembly of France to consider carefully what were the doctrines they were scattering broad-cast upon the land, and upon what soil they were to fall. Without disputing their abstract truth, we may protest against the propriety of their being proclaimed, as they were, at the moment when the king and the court had ceased to contend, and when the Assembly, or rather perhaps the people themselves, were now supreme. The true wisdom would have been to have left these abstract rights, where they were found, in the intuitions of the understanding and in the first and inevitable feelings of the heart; to have left them there, acknowledged and undisturbed, and then to have proceeded immediately, as it were, to business; and as the night of the 4th of August had cleared away the stage, first to have secured the proper existence of the king and the executive power, and then to have made such reforms in the laws and the system of taxation as would have reconciled all Frenchmen, who meant well, to the Revolution and the new order of things; proclaiming aloud, not the doctrines

that might flatter the people into madness and folly, but those that showed them the danger of their situation; the necessity, to them, of peace and order; the benevolent nature of their king; how fruitless must be the effort that could now be made by the court to resist the labours of the Assembly; and how evident it was that the community could have now no enemy but its own irritability and rashness.

I do not deny, I am happy to acknowledge, that great wisdom and caution were shown by Mounier and his friends; that it will be an eternal honour to their memory that they made great provisions for the stability of the royal power. You must never forget, what I have already announced to you, that they (the first committee of five) determined the three great questions, on which the future existence of the royal power depended, quite right and in favour of it. This was great merit in them, considering the times and circumstances in which they were placed; and had they been properly countenanced and assisted by others, all might have been well. Very different were, however, the views and feelings of but too many of the most enlightened and powerful men of the Assembly at the time. These men (and the Assembly unfortunately followed them) went far greater lengths than Mounier and the admirers of the English constitution; and the first thing they had to do, as they supposed, was, after the example of America, to teach the people their rights, and to exhibit the principles upon which the existing government was to be swept away, and a new one substituted in its room. Mounier's scheme was therefore rejected, and a new declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen (followed by most important alterations in the intended constitution) was drawn up and presented to the king. In this declaration, by the first article it was laid down that all men were born and remained free and equal, and that social distinctions could only be founded on common utility. The natural rights of man were declared by the second to be liberty, property, security, and resistance against oppression; and by the third, that the principle of sovereignty resided essentially in the nation, and that no body of men and no individual could exercise an authority that did not emanate expressly from that source.

In the preface to the Declaration, it was said, that these natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man were thus exhibited, in order that being ever present to all the members of the social body, they might be incessantly reminded of their rights and their duties, and that the acts of the legislative power and those of the executive power being every moment compared with the end of all politica institutions, both might require the more respect. Finally, that the remonstrances of the citizens, being thus founded henceforward on simple and incontestable principles, might ever tend to maintain the constitution and to promote the general good.

Now what we contend for is, that, independent of the democratic provisions of the constitution, by which they were followed, doctrines and prefaces like these, however fitted for America in June, 1776, at the beginning of a doubtful and even unpromising contest with the king of Great Britain and a parliament that would not listen to petitions, were far from being fitted to the situation of France, and more particularly of Paris, in August, 1789,—to the case of a benevolent monarch with a people in a state of triumphant insurrection, headed by an Assembly, a single Assembly, that were the representatives of the whole community, and that were exercising all the powers of it. Our argument will not be affected by supposing the court and the royal party more powerful than they are here conceived to be. If they were, it then became still more a matter of prudence to offer them better terms, and to keep out of their sight such principles as must necessarily be offensive to them. But the National Assembly must at all events be considered, in this stage of the Revolution, as the triumphant party; and it is impossible for us, at this distance of time, not to contrast, as Mr. Burke did at an earlier period, the moderation and the good sense of the Whigs in 1688, with the rashness and enthusiasm of the leaders of the Constituent Assembly a century afterwards, in August, 1789; for so far these two very dissimilar cases may be compared.

These principles of the rights of man you will see very fully and earnestly discussed in the works you will have to read, more especially in Burke and Mackintosh. They were after-

wards produced by Paine, in his celebrated pamphlet "Rights of Man," and applied to our own constitution. The propagation of these doctrines gave the greatest alarm to the generality of the people of property of this country, and you will therefore consider the first appearance of these principles in France with a more than usual interest; and you may now do it with impartiality and calmness, unaffected by the passions which were most tremendously excited by the situation of France, and indeed of Europe, at this particular period.

In the mean time, there is one observation which may be very obviously made, and which I must even now present to your consideration; and it is this: that these rights of man, under whatever form presented, are in fact abstract political maxims; are to be received, if received at all, as the intuitions of the understanding, when applying itself to the subject of politics; as the metaphysical or moral axioms of the science.

Now what may or may not be justly so esteemed, under what limitations and what exceptions, must be ever a matter of discussion; and as it is the business of statesmen and reformers, as much as possible, to avoid subjects of debate and collision, all such men, if they are wise, will keep at the greatest possible distance from all elementary rights and principles. They will in reality proceed upon them, and take such of them for granted as are clearly connected with the public happiness; but they will say little or nothing about them, and certainly not preface their measures or open their discussions with abstract positions and metaphysical generalities of this kind, but hasten on to practice and to the real wants and wishes of their fellow citizens, as they see them plainly existing before them, not expecting too much from themselves or others, and above all things, losing no time.

I have already intimated to you, that when Mounier's scheme had been rejected, a new one was at last formed. This new Declaration of Rights (of the 17th of August) consisted of seventeen articles, and this was immediately followed by nineteen supplementary articles of the constitution, October 1st, 1789; and of these last articles, it must be remarked, that, by the fifth, the legislature was to consist only of one house; by the eleventh, the king was only to have a

suspensive veto; and by the fourth, the Assembly was to be permanent: that is, the king was not to have the power of dissolving the Assembly, and he was to have no army; so that the democratic principles announced in the Declaration were very decidedly carried into full effect in these proceedings of the Assembly; and it was very clear, that while the government was declared to be monarchical, the authority of the monarch was to be most materially changed, was indeed to be virtually destroyed.

For ourselves, we conceive that it was the business of the friends of freedom at this period to have taken security, as much as possible, against the exasperated popular feelings, against demagogues and mobs for the present, and against democracy for the future. But, on the contrary, the friends of freedom, most of them, seem to have been anxious chiefly and in the first place to provide against the court and the nobility and clergy for the present; and, secondly, against the renewal of the royal power, with its ancient tyrannies and abuses, for the future; and to have thought of little else.

To recapitulate, therefore, the subject, as far as we have hitherto alluded to it.

You will now, I hope, have a general notion, first, of the reasonable attempt that was made by Mounier and his friends to raise up a constitution somewhat after the English model.

Next, of the manner in which the minds of many patriotic members of the Assembly became inflamed by the new opinions, and particularly by the example of America.

Next, that in consequence, they formed a scheme of government of a much more democratic nature than Mounier's, consisting of seventeen articles, and nineteen supplementary articles.

And lastly, you will have, I hope, a general notion of these articles, and of the nature of the elements on which they were founded, the rights of man; on the whole, that the royal power was unreasonably and fatally weakened.

But I have also said, that the patriots and people of France had sufficient warning, in the different reasonings and speeches of intelligent men, of the mistakes they were committing.

Much light is thrown on points of this nature by the

weekly journal, the Mercure. Slight sketches of the debates are occasionally given, and a general notion may hence be formed of the violence of parties, the endless variety of human opinion, and the difficulties which the counsels of wise and good men have inevitably to encounter when they are to address themselves to the passions and abide the decisions of any large and popular assembly. I will endeavour, as I have said, to give you some general notion of these debates given in this journal; but you will not find your time thrown away (very much otherwise) if you refer to the journal yourselves.

Turning, then, to this journal, and as a specimen of the manner in which the majority of the Assembly neglected the reasonable observations that were made to them, I shall first allude to the report that was delivered to them by the committee of five (Mounier and his friends) on the very important point, whether there should be two houses or one. I shall then give a specimen of the debates on the subject of the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

"Some persons," says the report, "are attached to the system of one chamber; they appeal to the happy effects produced in the instance of the National Assembly already; they argue, that it is the common will that should make the law, and that it is best seen in a single chamber; that every division of the legislative body, by destroying its unity, often renders impossible the most desirable institutions and the most salutary reforms; that such a division would introduce a constant struggle and combat into the very heart of the nation, the result of which must be either a political torpor and inertness or the most unhappy dissensions; that by the two chambers we should be also exposed to the dangers of a new aristocracy, which it is equally the wish and the interest of the nation to avoid."

The report has here fairly stated the arguments in favour of *one* chamber, but observe how just are the arguments urged in reply.

"Others," says the report, "on the contrary, contend that this division of the legislative body into two chambers is entirely necessary; that though one chamber might be more desirable in the moment of regeneration, when every obstacle

was to be resisted, two chambers are still the proper measure, and are indispensable for the preservation and stability of the constitution *afterwards*, and when it shall once have been determined upon; that two chambers are necessary to prevent all surprise and all precipitation, and to secure mature deliberation; that the intervention of the king in the legislation will be vain, illusory, and without effect, if it is to be opposed to the irresistible mass of the national will, brought forward and exhibited in one single assembly; that meaning first, and above all things, to make a constitution durable and solid, the National Assembly should take care to avoid every system which, throwing all the real power into the hands of the legislative body, could only render the monarch anxious to seize any opportunity to modify and change it, and expose the empire to new convulsions; that by giving the legislative body a great facility of movement, which is done by leaving it to act in one body, you expose it very idly to resolutions that are too sudden—resolutions inspired perhaps by some eloquent speech, some hasty enthusiasm, some intrigue in favour of ministers or against them, and that such precipitate resolutions must lead to despotism or to anarchy; finally, that the examples of England and America show the utility of two chambers, and are a sufficient answer to those who insist upon their inconvenience."

Such were the reasonings which this report of the five (of Mounier, Lally Tollendal, and others) exhibited on the great question of the two chambers; and the fate of the reasonings in favour of the two chambers, their real wisdom and total *failure* with the Assembly, is surely now, after all that we have seen, very remarkable.

And next, with respect to the second point, the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

I have already announced to you that very reasonable speeches were occasionally made in the Assembly; and the Assembly and people of France were not in the end wrong without having been first distinctly warned of the mistakes they might commit.

Observe some of the speeches that were made on this subject, that so agitated mankind at this period and long after, the rights of man.

M. de Riauzat protested against these printed formularies of declarations of rights. Liberty, according to him, was to emanate from the constitution and the decrees of the Assembly. Man could only be considered in a state of society: to take him in a state of nature, is to found political institutions upon bases merely chimerical.

M. Malonet could not see how a declaration of this kind was at all necessary to the destruction of tyranny; the constitution itself would be sufficient for this purpose. "Metaphysical maxims," he said, "are always little intelligible to the generality of mankind. It is dangerous to present the people with a system of rights of which their understandings can neither seize the proper character nor the limits. America was in a different situation. The rights proposed should be quite simplified and joined to the constitution itself."

A speech of greater length, by M. de Landine, is then given, who seems, in this speech at least, to have been one of the few men of letters disposed rather to practice than to theory.

"Far," said he, "from mounting up to the first origin of the social order, let us improve that in which we are placed; let us turn from the man in a natural state, let us consider him in a civilized. Without inquiring what we have been, or even what we are, let us fix our eyes on what we ought to be. Locke, Cumberland, Smith, Hume, Rousseau, and many others, have developed the great principles of laws; but we want now the practice, not the theory. We are not likely to lose sight of those principles, but it is the immediate application of them that is the business before us. The law itself will be better than a thousand prefaces to it. Our wisdom is to gain time, now that we have lost so much of it, and have no more to lose; and on no account to open wide to the public mind a vast field for disputes, and commentaries, and opinions. When points are made the subjects of long discussion, even among ourselves, can we suppose that the imaginations of others will not take fire? and the divisions, the controversial writings, and the debates that will ensue, will they not necessarily weaken the profound respect with which every thing that comes from the Assembly of the representatives of the nation should be received?"

This slight notice of what passed in the Assembly on the 3rd of August will give you a general notion of the style and import of the observations that were occasionally made there. There was no want of discussion, however stormy, or of intelligence, however unavailing.

I will now briefly allude to the events that took place, and to the constitution that really was formed.

And to give you, in the shortest manner I can, some general notion of the spirit in which the framers of it proceeded, I will also quote to you some of the sentiments that were expressed on the subject of the constitution of England. I will then conclude.

In the first place, then, on the 17th of August, when Mirabeau presented his report from Mounier's committee of five (he was one of the five), he accompanied it with a modest and sensible speech, stating the difficulties with which they had to struggle; and he renewed observations of this kind on the 18th. You will see his remarks in the Mercure, and still more at length in the printed account of his speeches. Great diversity of opinion prevailed. But this report as drawn up by the committee, though in itself so reasonable, though presented by Mirabeau, and though coming from Mounier and other men of such high authority, did not at all succeed; and this (you will remember) I consider as one of the fatal events of the Revolution.

A new effort to make a constitution was almost unanimously required; other schemes of government were afterwards considered, and the votes of the Assembly were taken. Forty appeared in favour of one by La Fayette; two hundred and forty for one by the Abbé de Sieyes; six hundred and forty for one attributed to the Bishop of Nancy.

On the 20th this last more favoured scheme was discussed. Great difference of opinion still prevailed on the whole and every part of it.

The great points of debate were, as I have already intimated, those more immediately connected with the prerogative of the king.

In the opening week of September questions, such as I have mentioned, had already agitated the Assembly.

An appeal was of course made to the example of England.

It had chanced that Rousseau, who was then the highest authority, had observed, in his Letters from the Mountains, that the veto of the king of England was, after all, so checked, and tempered, and controlled, as not to be formidable to liberty, and he counselled the representatives of Geneva not to deny their magistrates a similar power, if they wished for it; but now in France the orators and writers of the day still insisted that to give the veto was to establish despotism; that the English had given their kings the veto in feudal times of barbarism, and that they now repented.

It was in vain to reply that the English did not repent, and that they certainly flattered themselves that they were free. The same Rousseau was now again produced to prove that they were otherwise.

"The people of England," so went the quotation, "suppose themselves free, but they are quite mistaken; they are only so during the election of the members of parliament: when these are once elected, the people are then slaves; they are a mere nothing: this modern idea of representation is quite absurd, the offspring of the feudal governments," &c. &c.

When such sentiments as these could be quoted from Rousseau, and when Rousseau was to be considered not only as a moral sage, but as a political writer and a legislator, in what a bewildered state must have been the understandings of too many of the Assembly and of the community!

In the Mercure will be found a very full debate that took place on the 2nd of September. M. de Landnies seems to have spoken at great length.

"At every moment," said he, "the government of England is referred to. No doubt, considering the age in which it was formed, the government of England is a noble monument erected to the liberty of man; it is an enlightened system for that period, no doubt, but let us lay aside all prejudice. Does any one suppose that there is nothing there defective, that the English statesmen and reasoners see nothing there to correct? Are we to suppose that if England was now labouring, as we are labouring, and making a constitution, that she would establish it on the same bases which she has done; that she would retain even the House of Peers, very often indeed useful to the king, but always perfectly useless to the people.

"Never believe it, gentlemen, that England has done every thing for the happiness of mankind, and that we have nothing left but to copy her. Let us dare to do something better; let us have the elevated boldness to place the statue of Liberty on a base, that it will be still more impossible to overturn."

This paragraph will give you a notion of the sentiments of a large description of those who were unfortunately considered among the wisest at this particular period. "Talk not to me," said the celebrated Barnave in the same debate, "of the British constitution, formed not by the liberal use of reason, but the result of time and custom, and in the midst of wars and political events. It would be against all natural reason that the people should make their king into their legislator; it would be unjust to submit a whole nation to the caprices of a single man."

These were the notions that unhappily had taken possession of the patrons of the new opinions, and it was in vain that Mounier, virtuous and intrepid as he was wise, defended, apparently at the risk of his life, the views of the committee of the constitution, the plurality of chambers, the senate for life, and the absolute veto.

The debates through the whole month of September, 1789, continued to turn on the great points connected with the future constitution, but were still marked by violence and disorder. Nothing could exceed the commotion when M. de Virieux observed with a good sense, that was but too prophetic, "It is my duty strongly to warn you of the dangers that result from the unity of the Assembly; all numerous assemblies, if singly left to act, are hurried away by demagogues and popular fury, and they have always been the destruction of free states, after first tearing them to pieces by their factions."

Lally Tollendal afterwards appeared at the tribune; and the president, the bishop of Langres, was at last so offended by the treatment he received, that he threw up his post and put an end to the sitting.

The question upon which might be said almost to turn the fortunes of the Revolution, was the next day decided (the 10th of September), and most unfortunately decided; eight

hundred and forty-nine were for the single chamber, only eighty-nine for the double, and one hundred and twenty-two did not vote at all.

The next sitting was not less confused and stormy, so numerous were the different propositions made by different members—made, accepted, rejected, again and again.

It was at last voted that the royal consent was necessary to the constitution; seven hundred and thirty to one hundred and forty-three, one hundred and twenty-two not voting, and in favour of the absolute veto were three hundred and twenty-five; six hundred and seventy-three in favour of the suspension, eleven not voting. M. de St. Farzeau and Robespierre, afterwards so well known, were for an annual election of the Assembly; the Abbé de Maury was for a duration of four years; M. de Virieux, for three; M. Demeunier, for two: there seemed no probable end to the debates.

Mounier, Lally Tollendal, Borgasse, and Clermont Tonnerre almost immediately gave in their resignations as members of the committee of constitution, the committee of five. These were the men that, after the sitting of the 23rd of June, would have given the Revolution its second best chance of success. They failed; they were outvoted by La Fayette and his friends, by a large majority of the Constituent Assembly, who are therefore answerable for the event.

That these latter patriots, like the former, meant well, there can be no doubt. Their mistake (such I esteem it) I have endeavoured to explain; but of this mistake (they suffered for it severely) I shall often have to remind you, if I should hereafter come to consider the proceedings of the second or Legislative Assembly.

The lecture you have just heard was written some years ago, but I have just met a passage in Jefferson's Memoirs that illustrates many of the statements and opinions it contains. Jefferson, you may remember, was the American minister, resident at Paris at the time. He is speaking of the popular leaders. "When they proceeded to subordinate developements, many and various shades of opinion came into conflict; and schism, strongly marked, broke the patriots into fragments of very discordant principles. The first question, whether there should be a king, met with

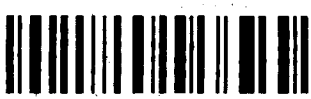
no open opposition; and it was readily agreed that the government of France should be monarchical and hereditary. Shall the king have a negative on the laws? Shall that negative be absolute or suspensive only? Shall there be two chambers of legislation? Or one only? If two, shall one of them be hereditary? Or for life? Or for a fixed term? And named by the king? Or elected by the people? These questions found strong differences of opinion, and produced repulsive combinations among the patriots. The aristocracy was cemented by a common principle, of preserving the ancient régime, or whatever should be nearest to it. Making this their polar star, they moved in phalanx, gave preponderance on every question to the minorities of the patriots, and always to those who advocated the least change. The features of the new constitution were thus assuming a fearful aspect, and great alarm was produced among the honest patriots by these dissensions in their ranks. In this uneasy state of things, I received one day a note from the Marquis de La Fayette, informing me that he should bring a party of six or eight friends to ask a dinner of me the next day. I assured him of their welcome. When they arrived they were, La Fayette himself, Duport, Barnave, Alexander Lameth, Blacon, Mounier, Maubourg, and Dagout. These were leading patriots of honest but differing opinions, sensible of the necessity of effecting a coalition by mutual sacrifices, knowing each other, and not afraid, therefore, to unbosom themselves mutually. This last was a material principle in the selection. With this view the Marquis had invited the conference, and had fixed the time and place inadvertently, as to the embarrassment under which it might place me. The cloth being removed, and wine set on the table after the American manner, the Marquis introduced the objects of the conference by summarily reminding them of the state of things in the Assembly, the course which the principles of the constitution were taking, and the inevitable result, unless checked by more concord among the patriots themselves. He observed, that although he also had his opinion, he was ready to sacrifice it to that of his brethren of the same cause; but that a common opinion must now be formed, or the aristocracy would carry every thing, and that, whatever they should now agree on, he,

at the head of the national force, would maintain. The discussions began at the hour of four, and were continued till ten o'clock in the evening; during which time I was a silent witness to a coolness and candour of argument, unusual in the conflicts of political opinion; to a logical reasoning, and chaste eloquence, disfigured by no gaudy tinsel of rhetoric or declamation, and truly worthy of being placed in parallel with the finest dialogues of antiquity, as handed to us by Xenophon, by Plato, and Cicero. The result was, that the king should have a suspensive veto on the laws, that the legislature should be composed of a single body only, and that, to be chosen by the people. This concordat decided the fate of the constitution. The patriots all rallied to the principles thus settled, carried every question agreeably to them, and reduced the aristocracy to insignificance and impotence."

Such is the account of Jefferson. Such, you see, were then the patriots of France; the logic and the eloquence of Xenophon, Plato, and Cicero; and with the best intentions. But all in vain amidst the enthusiasm of the new opinions—an enthusiasm which I must for ever represent to you as one of the great lessons of the French Revolution.

END OF VOLUME I.

CHARLES WHITTINGHAM,
CHISWICK.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